No. 1027
4 May –
17 May 2001
£1.20

PRIVATE EYE

CENSUS 2001

EVERY 10 YEARS Private Eye conducts a census of its readers, in order to enable our marketing department to develop forward-planning initiatives and editorial policy.

This census form *must* be filled in by all readers, at exactly the same time — *ie*, between 2 and 4am on the morning of Sunday 6 May, 2001.

Failure to complete all 397 sections of the form is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine not exceeding £5,000 or death.

IDENTIFICATION

1 Please give full names and address, including postal code, of all persons in the household at 2am on 6 May, including visiting relatives, non-live-in partners staying one night only, burglars visiting the property for professional reasons and domestic pets (excluding fish).

RELATIONSHIPS

2 Explain the exact relationship between each member of your household. If Person A (the main householder) is the live-in partner of Person B, but not the father or mother of Persons C, D, E or F, then he or she should ignore this question and go straight to Question 9B.

RACE

3 **Which of the following descriptions corresponds most closely to your ethnic origin?**

a) White (no sugar) ☐
b) White (with two sugars) ☐
c) Afro-Welsh-Oriental ☐
d) Irish-Asian ☐
e) German Shepherd ☐
f) Chicken Tikka Masala ☐
g) Robin Cook ☐

RELIGION *(optional)*

4 **Do you practise any of the following world religions?**

a) Church of Scientology ☐
b) Acupuncture ☐
c) Aromatherapy ☐
d) Jews For Islam ☐
e) Opus Dei ☐
f) Chicken Tikka Masala ☐

WORKING TIME

5 **How many hours a week do you work at your principal place of employment?**

a) 10-15 ☐
b) More than 65 ☐
c) Self-employed ☐
d) Retired over 75 ☐

Those on benefit should skip this question and report to the Job Centre within one week, or else face penalties up to £5,000.

HOUSEHOLD FACILITIES

6 **How many toilets are there in your house?**

a) Up to 10 ☐
b) More than 20 ☐
c) None ☐

If c), skip question, and go out of window.

How many times, on average, do you and members of your household use the toilet per month?

a) Over 170 ☐
b) Between 123 and 169 ☐
c) Ask the audience ☐
d) None ☐

If d), consult a General Practitioner immediately.

LIFESTYLE

7 **What is the number owned by your household of:**

a) Lawnmowers ☐
b) Pyjamas (males only) ☐
c) Grapefruit segments ☐
d) Zimmer frames ☐
e) Unsolicited free copies of The Spectator ☐

POLITICS

8 **Who is your favourite television personality?**

a) ITN's Trevor McDonald ☐
b) Call Nick Ross ☐
c) Ulrika Jonsson ☐
d) Anne Robinson ☐
e) TV's Charles Moore ☐

SEXUALITY

9 **In which of the following locations do you normally engage in sexual congress?**

a) Bedroom ☐
b) Living room settee ☐
c) Desk in office ☐
d) Broom cupboard in restaurant ☐
e) NCP Car Park ☐
f) Chicken Tikka Masala ☐

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the views behind the news

Gnome

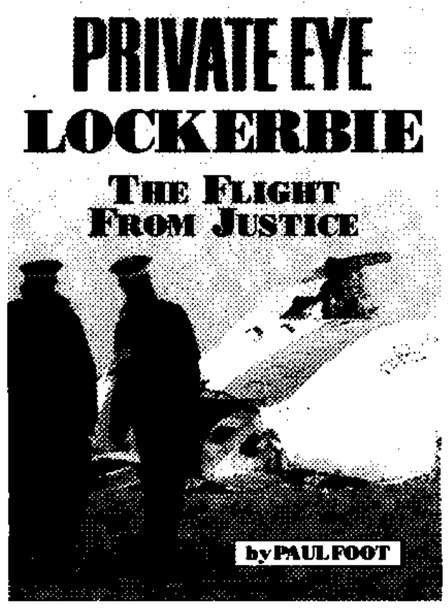
I AM appalled and disgusted by the hurtful accusations that when I become chairman of both the GBC (Gnome Broadcasting Corporation) and GT (Gnome Telecom) I will face a conflict of interest.

Can I state categorically that no such conflict of interest will arise since I have only one interest, which is the money.

E. Strobes
pp Lord Gnome
Blandcasting House

"You have to be really well organised to be an anarchist"

NEW FROM THE *EYE*



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- *Brussels Sprouts: EU Poison* **14**
- *Heath's Private View: Tracey Emin* **23**
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THOUGH British Telecom shares took a £2bn tumble with the news that Sir Christopher "Pigling" Bland, chairman of the BBC governors, was to become BT's new chairman, it is not as if the move was unpredicted. Moreover, the relationship between the BBC and BT has been cosy in recent years.

Under Bland's chairmanship the Beeb has been providing BT with free content from its internet wing, bbc.co.uk, for some time. ITN made a big fuss about this but the regulators did nothing to stop it.

Back in January 2000 the Beeb also cooperated with BT to create "an interactive exhibition" of multi-media technology, featuring BBC programmes paid for by the licence-payer and showcasing BT technology.

And it was Bland who gave the go ahead for BBC Worldwide, the Beeb's commercial arm, to adopt "a more commercial approach", enabling it to make a handsome profit out of the licence-payer. And who was appointed head of Worldwide at the time? Rupert Gavin, who until 1998 was managing director of the commercial division of... British Telecom.

The possible connotations of Bland's move to the ailing telecoms giant are especially intriguing when one recalls a speech by Labour's Gerald Kaufman in the year before "new" Labour came to power.

Kaufman, a longtime scourge of broadcasters and chair of the culture, media and sport select committee in the Commons, expressed strong views on the future of both the BBC and BT in a parliamentary debate in 1996. He said he had long advocated "that the BBC should forge partnerships with major players in the national and international communications arena".

As he continued: "Above all, the BBC should cultivate the possibility of a partnership with BT. Given that United States-owned cable companies are allowed to poach BT's telephone subscribers, the government's failure to allow it to participate in television transmission is unacceptable. The government's failure to remove legal restrictions on BT as a broadcaster is an act of purblind folly."

Now that BT has hit the rocks, could Bland's appointment, fully condoned by Downing Street, be seen as heralding a new co-operation?

● *More on Britain's busiest man, p. 11*

THE claim by Robin Corbett MP (see *Eyes passim*) that his local Erdington Labour party would "be consulted over the shortlist of candidates" to replace him proved as untrue as the MP's other claim that the "NEC cannot shoo in a Blairite carpet bagger, even if it wanted too".

In the event London-based Blairite *News of the Screws* columnist Sion Simon won the selection from a shortlist of four drawn up by the NEC – a list which excluded all local applicants. Simon wrote to members saying: "Erdington was the only parliamentary selection I have ever sought", seemingly forgetting his earlier interest in Leeds Central and the Rhondda, when he preferred to be known as Sion "Llewelyn" Simon.

Several longstanding party members stalked out of the Erdington selection meeting in disgust at finding locals had been excluded. But the meeting nearly failed to take place at all. For on 19 March Fiona Gordon, on behalf of the West Midlands regional Labour party, sent a letter inviting members to attend the hustings meeting on 1 April, but then went on to say: "According to our records, you will not be able to take part in the process."

A second letter the following day "clarified" matters by advising members that they could vote unless there was an enclosed green form that said they couldn't. "New" Labour, New Democracy!

UNLIKE certain Tories, six Scottish Nationalist Party MPs have signed up to the commission for racial equality's (CRE) pre-election compact. But did SNP leader John Swinney and his five colleagues actually read the terms of the CRE document beforehand?

The compact states: "The right to free political expression must not be abused in the competition for popular votes by causing or exploiting prejudice or discrimination on grounds of race or nationality." Is this really compatible with the SNP's self-professed mission to "always put the Scottish interest first"?

FOOT & MOUTH Infecting teams available. 24 Hour response time. Experienced teams, working contracts with MAFF.

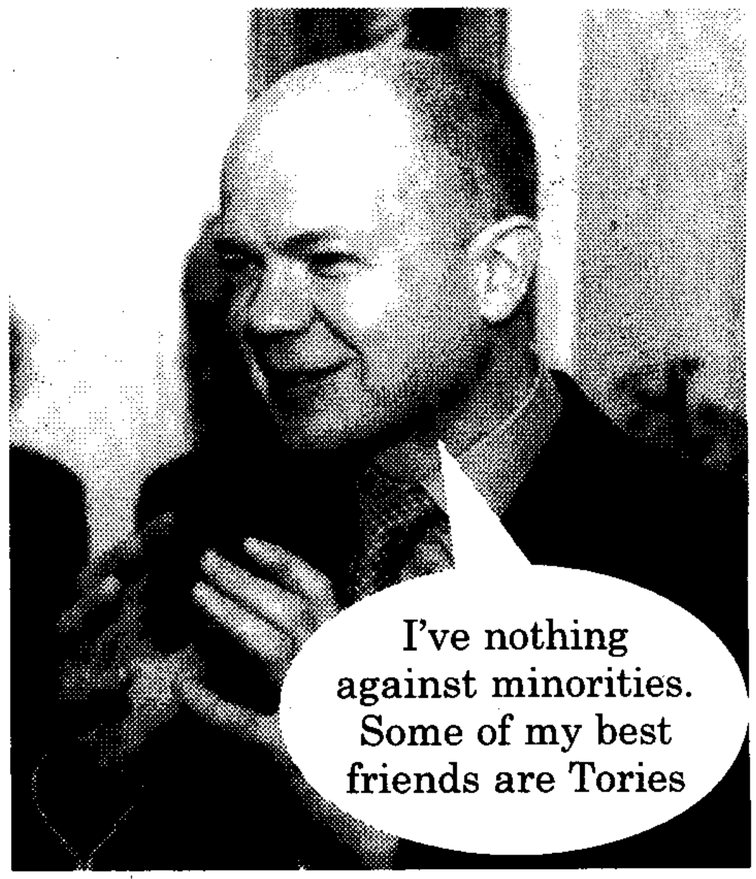
Darlington & Stockton Times

AD NAUSEAM

ANOTHER week, another "new" Labour poster. While the Tories quietly self-destruct, approaching new ad agencies almost every week in the hope that someone, somewhere can save the stricken beast, Labour continues to block-book the nation's ad space because there's not much else to do and party coffers are bulging.

The latest offering consists of nothing but the thunderous platitude "The work goes on," a humdinging space-filler plucked from the great idea-vacuum in the sky by tired creatives at TBWA. This in the same week that figures revealed government ad spend in the first three months of 2001 had risen to £62.7m.

Double that of last year, twice as much as the nation's second biggest advertiser but pure coincidence that this is an election year, sayeth Millbank. This is rot, of course: though the published spend goes on awareness campaigns – for police recruitment, the census etc – and is therefore deemed to be in the public interest, any government campaign comes with the underlying message "Look at all the stuff we're doing". Or to paraphrase, "The work goes on".



NEWS

NOTHING, it seems, can slow the rise of Sir Steve Robson, the mastermind behind the greatest economic disaster of our times: the privatisation of the railways.

As second secretary at the treasury he forced through the great railway fiasco under the Tories and, under "new" Labour, commended himself to Gordon Brown with his outspoken attacks on the behaviour of the big banks. Now he has retired from the civil service and become a director of Partnerships UK (P:UK) and the Royal Bank of Scotland

However, Sir Steve may not be allowed immediately to advise his new bosses on anything to do with the railways or any of the many other privatisations in which he was involved at the treasury. This is because of the annoying rule requiring any civil servant seeking a job in private industry to seek the permission of the commission on public appointments, which answers to the prime minister.

A spokesman for the cabinet office tells *Private Eye* that Sir Steve did indeed seek the permission of the commission to take up his new job – and was granted it on the rather strict condition that he abstain for six months from any work that could possibly conflict with his former duties as a government servant.

APRIL has been the kindest month for Valerie Howarth, the chief executive of the telephone charity Childline, who has just been named one of the 15 new "People's Peers", and has also been appointed to the new National Care Standards Commission.

There was a time when Ms Howarth's dreams of admittance to the ranks of the great and good seemed to have been dashed once and for all. In 1984 she was director of social services in the London borough of Brent, when a four-year-old girl in the council's care, Jasmine Beckford, was battered to death by her stepfather. Although she was cleared by the subsequent inquiry she was disciplined by Brent council and given a written warning for not taking greater personal responsibility in the case.

The following year Ms Howarth applied for and secured the post of social services director at Cambridgeshire county council, but omitted to mention the Beckford case in her interview. When it came to light the job offer was withdrawn.

Number crunchings

£5m

bonus paid to former Schroders chairman, Sir Win Bischoff

£25,000

bonus paid to former Schroders equities analyst, Julie Bowers, who successfully took the firm to a tribunal on the grounds of sex discrimination

Street Of Shame

A SERIES of parliamentary answers reveals that the department of trade's marathon inquiry into the City Slickers is being carried out under a section of the companies act which guarantees total secrecy unless criminal charges are brought against Piers Morgan, the Slickers or anyone else involved in the share-ramping scandal.

Shades of Lord Archer and Anglia TV, and indeed Geoffrey Robinson and Robert Maxwell. How very convenient for "new" Labour, the Trinity Mirror board and of course Mr Tony's most malleable editor. The main victims, of course, will be those innocent *Mirror* readers who were cynically ripped off in the "fill yer boots" scam.

Funnily enough, before being engulfed by Slickergate, Moron ranted against the Department of Timidity and Inaction for the secrecy surrounding cases such as that of milord Archer. So will he and Trinity Mirror now demand publication of the DTI's Slickergate report, no matter how embarrassing it may be?

Er, no.

BATHROOM SUITE, avocado basin, pedestal symphonic toilet, bath with side/end panels, no taps.

ADvantage, East Grinstead

RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond is delighted with how well *Sunday Express* editor Mike Pilgrim has adapted to the new regime. Pilgrim's main editorial task is to print what the proprietor wants – and he turns out to be very good at it.

On 22 April, for example, the paper's business section included no fewer than three stories run on the direct orders of Desmond. Two had no foundation in fact or substance. The third was a shameless puff piece for Mohamed Fayed's internet gambling venture ("Online Casino Deals an Ace"), which was said to be "opening up new frontiers".

The *Express* claimed the website is run from Costa Rica "because UK online gambling law is unclear", but neglected to mention a more obvious reason: that the Phoney Pharaoh would never be granted a licence by the gaming board in a million years.

It also omitted the motive for running this drivel: that Chairman Mo, Dirty Des's new best friend, is now one of the biggest advertisers in *Express* titles.

Of the other two stories, one was an attack on magazine publisher Emap, which had "lost the Midas touch" after "a series of business blows and blunders". Shareholders were said to be particularly irritated by the group's celebrity-based magazine *Heat*, which has a weekly circulation of 170,000: "Estimates by publishing sources suggest each issue would be bringing in revenues of £150,000 with costs of £350,000. If correct... then Emap would suffer annual losses of up to £10 million."

Might the anonymous "publishing source" by any chance be a certain cigar-chomping pornographer? Desmond wants to turn the Saturday *Express* magazine into a celebrity listings mag exactly like *Heat*: he therefore wants to see the Emap title closed down in the hope that its 170,000 purchasers will move to the *Express*.

The third Desmond-inspired "news story" was a hatchet-job on *Telegraph* owner Conrad Black, who was berated for his "autocratic management style" and "bumper salary".(How unlike Dirty Des!) "Investors," it reported, "are beginning to wonder just where, if anywhere, his corporate empire is heading."

In yet another fit of absent-mindedness, the *Express* forgot to mention one answer: that Black is heading for a legal showdown with Desmond in their acrimonious dispute over the West Ferry printing works, which they own jointly.

While everything else in the *Express* busines section that day had a proper byline, the Fayed puff was anonymous while the score-settling pieces about Emap and Black were merely "by our City staff". Who he? Step forward Anil "Fill Yer Boots" Bhoyrul, disgraced City Slicker. Though he was too corrupt even for Piers Morgan, Bhoyrul is clearly a man after Dirty Des's own heart.

MAX "Hitler" Hastings has evidently been reading Sinclair Lewis, who remarked that "the power of the press is the power to *suppress*".

Having endured many weeks of well-merited abuse from the London *Evening Standard* over his plans to part-privatise the London underground, John Prescott finally decided to write a letter to the editor defending himself. Hitler refused to print it – explaining loftily that the deputy prime minister "had already received generous space in the *Standard*" (even if most of that space was filled with criticism).

Will Max apply the same bizarre rule if his paper ever receives a letter from Tony Blair or Prince Charles seeking a right of reply? Perhaps not: at least they went to decent public schools.

Meanwhile the *Standard*'s "US correspondent" Molly Watson – a Hitler *protegée* – was assigned to cover Prezza's fact-finding tour of the New York subway last week. Quite why the *Standard* needs to have a hackette installed in a company-paid apartment in Manhattan has been questioned by some executives at Associated Newspapers (none of Hitler's predecessors thought it necessary); but the expense was amply justified by Watson's report on the Prescott trip – a full-page piece in which she managed to mis-spell Bob Kiley's name as "Kylie" throughout.

FLEET STREET's fashion hackettes were understandably ecstatic at the rollcall of glamorous celebs who attended last week's "gala opening" in New York of an exhibition of Jackie Kennedy's old frocks: Renee Zellweger, Helena Christensen, Stella McCartney, Gwyneth Paltrow, Elle Macpherson, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington...

Only one newspaper, however, recorded the presence of another style icon. "Barbara Amiel, Mrs Conrad Black, [chose] a bright rose-pink Yves Saint Laurent," it noted, adding that this was one of Jackie Kennedy's "favourite shades".

Well done, milady! And well done the *Daily Telegraph* for elevating its proprietor's wife to the supermodel stratosphere where she belongs.

LATEST victim of an indictment from Julie Burchill in the *News of the World* is, inevitably, Anne Robinson.

"She did her best to live the life by making a disastrous marriage to a fellow hack and becoming a genuine, drop-down, sick-in-the-gutter alcoholic," writes Julie. Worse still, Robinson "gets her kicks by shooting her mouth off unwisely. Her nasty and cowardly attack on the Welsh was typical". And she's no oil painting: "To say the least, Anne's looks are unusual... Her total lack of sex appeal is a gimmick beyond price." In mitigation, however, Julie acknowledges that "she has established the right to be a cantankerous old bag and still rake it in". Something which no one, surely, could ever say of gorgeous, teetotal, monogamous and magnanimous Julie Burchill.

GORDON GREIG, the veteran political correspondent formerly of the *Sunday Times*, *Daily Mail* etc, took pity on Jeffrey Archer in his hour of need and invited him to lunch at White's, the exclusive Tory club.

All went well and no one made any unpleasant comment. But after lunch the secretary of the club took Greig to one side and made it clear that, though no complaint was intended, it would be better for everyone if the invitation was not repeated.

"Congratulations... it's a lifestyle choice"

"Spare a small fortune for a regular full fat almond latte to go, guv?"

LYING IN THE SUN

WHEN it emerged that the suspected killer of Caroline Dickinson was a drifter from Gijon, Fleet Street despatched its finest to the grimy seaside town in northern Spain.

Their first port of call was the office of *El Comercio*, the local paper which first revealed the violent past of Francisco Arce Montes and has since run splash after splash about the "monster" who is now in a Miami jail

With the help of *El Comercio* and the police, the hacks soon found the flat where Arce Montes's sister, brother-in-law and 83-year-old mother lived. Letters were stuck under the door promising vast sums for interviews and pictures. But Andres Moro Blanco, the long-suffering brother-in-law, explained to the pack that neither the senile old lady nor his wife would be giving interviews.

"My Evil Son DID Murder Caroline," roared the front-page headline in the next day's *Sun*, over a story from Brian Flynn in Gijon. A double-page spread inside, headed "Sorrow of Beast's Mum", claimed that "Benigna Montes, 83, asked the *Sun* to convey her family's sorrow over the killing to grieving John and Sue Dickinson". There followed five paragraphs of alleged quotes from the anguished widow. "I am really very sorry for all my son has done... We want to speak out because we do not want people to think we are supporting someone who has done such horrible things."

The *Daily Mirror* had a similar piece by Alexandra Williams in Gijon ("I'm Sure My Son Did Kill Caroline: Tearful Mum Disowns Murder Suspect").

The story was picked up by prime-time Spanish TV news. Baffled hacks on *El Comercio*, bollocked by their editor for missing such a scoop, rushed round to the flat, only to discover that the tales in the *Sun* and *Mirror* were lies – not just embellishments, but pure fiction.

A furious Andres Moro issued a categorical denial that any interview had taken place. While the family did indeed feel sorrow for Caroline's murder, he said, the attempted cheque-book journalism was "the final straw. To do that would be to prey on our pain and that of others who have suffered". He pleaded for the family to be left alone.

El Comercio illustrated its piece with an archive photo of Arce Montes in handcuffs being escorted to court by two Spanish civil guards after an earlier arrest – whereupon the Britpack hurtled round to the paper's office, chequebooks in hand, and tried to buy exclusive rights to the picture. Appalled by Fleet Street's antics, the picture editor refused all offers and released it through the news agency EFE instead, free of charge. *El Comercio*'s reporters, who had originally helped out their British colleagues, were by now describing them as "hijos de puta" and "cabrones" (sons of bitches and bastards).

So far so traditional: red-top hacks go abroad and make it up, assuming that the locals will never see what they write. But there's a difference. In what could be a pioneering legal assault on tabloid tosh, Francisco Arce Montes's family intend to sue in the local courts. Since both the *Sun* and the *Mirror* print editions in Spain, they are subject to the Spanish penal code – Article 208 of which imposes unlimited fines in cases where slanders or libels "have been carried out knowing they are false or had total disregard for the truth".

Still, the British hacks who dealt with Benigna Montes clearly have their interviews on tape, and neither they nor their employers have anything to fear from a little old Spanish lady and her family.

SLAVEWATCH

IT'S Easter, you've got a newspaper to fill and nothing is happening. Epiphany! From a remote corner of Africa, a slave ship emerges. Salvation! The slaves are black children, who will be bought by black people from black slave traders to work on plantations producing the cocoa that makes our chocolate Easter eggs. That, at least, is what someone somewhere in west Africa is saying, which is good enough for the United Nations Children's Fund – and, of course, for Fleet Street's finest.

15 April: The *Sunday Telegraph* is first off the mark. Christina Lamb, diplomatic editor, reports mounting fears over "the fate of 250 children aboard a slave ship running dangerously short of food and water, which has been unable to dock in West African waters". The children are from "Benin and neighbouring Togo, are thought to be as young as 10 and to have been sold for as little as £10 by their parents".

The *Observer* is also on the case. "Unesco officials have laid plans to arrest the operators of a slave ship carrying an estimated 250 children," says Cameron Duodu. "Like everything else in the horrible business of child slavery, the origins of the slave boat are shrouded in mystery," he concedes, as indeed may be the difference between Unicef and Unesco.

16 April: Mary Braid at the *Independent* has more facts. "Four days ago the MV Etireno, a filthy Nigerian-registered rustbucket, crowded with hundreds of sickly child slaves, was turned away from the west African port of Douala in Cameroon... Last night UN officials and international charities were still waiting at Cotonou, increasingly fearful about the fate of up to 250 children aged eight to 15, 'sold' by their poverty-stricken families to slave traffickers."

Even the *Daily Telegraph*, normally a supporter of private enterprise in all its forms, is outraged. "Three centuries after the Bight of Benin became notorious for slavery, world attention is on it again as an area where such trafficking is a way of life," notes Tim Butcher from his vantage point several thousand miles away in Johannesburg. "Reports about conditions on board remain sketchy," he concedes. "There has been no independent confirmation of the existence of the children on the ship." But never mind: "The account is consistent with an established pattern."

Chris McGreal, seasoned Africa hand at the *Guardian*, agrees. Although "it is not exactly clear how many children were loaded", he can say that the operation took place with "no trouble". In the *Daily Mail*, Barbara Jones reckons that there are "at least 300 children" on the Etireno. "Those who are not killed by lack of food and water may simply be thrown overboard alive," she warns.

17 April: The holidays are over and the tabloids are in full cry. Simon "Voyage of the Damned" Hughes at the *Sun* reports that "some of the children are stricken with malaria and dysentery". Bob Roberts, the *Mirror*'s political correspondent, can find only 180 children aboard the rusting trawler. From her ringside seat in South Africa, Jane Flanagan of the *Express* guesses that "the children will starve to death or be dumped at sea".

In the *Times* Michael Dynes says the US is looking to offer assistance in the search for "the decrepit cargo ship carrying up to 250 child slaves". The Thunderer also has an indignant leader – but somewhere between the news and editorial pages, 50 of the unfortunate youths have gone missing. Now the boat in question has only "up to 200 children" aboard, "most under the age of 12".

The *pièce de résistance* is delivered by Glenda "The Ship That Shames Us All" Cooper in the *Daily Mail*, who provides a startlingly vivid insight into conditions on this latter-day Middle Passage. "Packed so tightly that they could not sit down in the dank hold, these frightened children aged between eight and 15 would have been delirious with the heat and dehydration," she can exclusively reveal. "Covered in their own faeces and vomit, many would have succumbed to disease."

18 April: The Etireno has returned to Cotonou port during the night. At the *Daily Mail*, Glenda Cooper is nowhere to be found. Instead, the paper's modestly anonymous "foreign service" sets the record straight by copying out a Reuters dispatch: "The hunt for the ship believed to be carrying scores of children into slavery ended in fiasco yesterday when authorities found only economic migrants board... Passengers said the ship had been turned away from Gabon not because it had child slaves aboard but because it was carrying illegal immigrants... Contrary to reports that the Nigerian registered ship was a rusting and decrepit hulk, the Etireno appeared to be newly painted."

But David Aaronovitch in the *Independent* doesn't see why the story should be spoiled by a few facts. Even if most of the reports in recent days were largely invention, he observes, "in a way, it doesn't matter".

20 April: The *Economist* sums up. "Short of news over the Easter break, editors turned their attention to a rusting freighter chugging around the Bight of Benin allegedly with 250 child slaves aboard... Since the boat was at sea, the story was uncheckable."

21 April: Not so fast, however. Valiantly trying to salvage something from the wreckage, the *Grauniad* runs a front-page splash headed "The Terrible Truth About the Ship of Slaves." Although the 114 adult passengers were economic migrants, there were also 31 youths on board who may have been going to work in Gabon. "The truth about the Etireno may be less dramatic than first suggested," James Astill writes, "and far more insidious for that." How can a couple of dozen suspected teenage labourers be "far more insidious" than 250 definite child-slaves? Answer comes there none.

22 April: Exclusive! Barbara Jones of the *Mail on Sunday* has interviewed some of the teenage boys from the Etireno. "I was the first journalist to meet the children from the African 'slave ship' – and to hear the extraordinary story of their hellish voyage and shattered dreams of a better life," she boasts. "The children revealed that they boarded the boat willingly... They thought the voyage would take them to jobs and a brave new future." No matter: Unicef's programme director in Benin tells Jones that "we have facts and figures that should break the world's hearts."

Facts and figures, eh? Now there's a novelty.

HOW PICTURE DESKS WORK

TALES of child slave labour in West Africa filled the newspapers over Easter (see above), but just three weeks earlier the *Guardian* had shown scant interest in the very same subject.

When Mike Sheil, a corporate photographer who had been working in Gabon on behalf of a friend's charity, returned with photographs of child slaves, he naively thought he had a major news story on his hands and telephoned the *Guardian* foreign desk.

He spoke to a girl who appeared never to have heard of Gabon, and who suggested that he send the photos to the picture desk to see what they made of them. The following day he rang the picture desk, where editors grunted they had been too busy to look at the shots. Sheil let the matter drop, as he had to fly to the US on business. He returned just as the supposed plight of the children aboard the slave ship hit the headlines, and was eating Easter lunch with his family when the *Grauniad* rang to say that actually they were quite interested after all, and could he send the pictures again as they had lost the originals.

The *Telegraph* also got in touch and demanded to know if he had "any pictures of girls as prostitutes on the streets". The *Torygraph* had to make do with a photograph of a young girl in floods of tears, which it captioned: "Tears of joy from a young girl after being freed from a plantation in Gabon"; a label which conveniently fitted the accompanying story about western chocolate consumption relying on child slave labour on cacao plantations on the Ivory Coast.

Had the *Torygraph's* caption writer read the previous day's *Grauniad* in which the same picture appeared, however, he or she would have discovered that the girl had not escaped from a cacao plantation, but had run away from her owner after spending four months selling cakes while starving herself on the streets of Libreville, the capital of Gabon, and was crying because she could not believe the nuns now sheltering her were not going to beat her for stealing a biscuit from the kitchen.

IN THE TEAROOM

IF Tony Blair was a completely stupid politician, what would he do just before calling a general election? Well, one sure fire way of damaging his party's morale would be to call in some of his leakier cronies for a good long gossip about the forthcoming reshuffle. Just what John Prescott needs before heading off to put some fire in the bellies of the Labour heartlands is to hear the sniggers about his impending exile to the cabinet office behind his back in the tearoom.

Labour's bleeding-heart contingent can't be much happier to discover that the new home secretary is to be David Blunkett, the only man in the cabinet who can make Jack Straw look like a social liberal. And can anyone (except Stephen Byers) be pleased to learn that the man soon to be in charge of the nation's schools is... Stephen Byers?

Most outbreaks of reshuffle fever can be traced back to a small number of ministerial "carriers". There is usually a healthy diversity of strain: one rumour nicely contradicted, or at least qualified, by another. But this time it's different. Westminster has talked of pretty much nothing else this past week, but more or less everyone has been attaching the same names to the same jobs. The only real disputes have been if Derry Irvine really is for the chop and whether Nick Brown has or hasn't escaped the cull and will be allowed to set up a new department of rural affairs.

Most are agreed that Dobbo is set for a comeback – probably as chief whip to replace the outgoing Ann Taylor. Stocks in Chris Smith have been falling again... but then they always do in advance of reshuffles, yet somehow he survives. It's hardly news that it will be goodbye to Mo and Baroness Jay, nor that Patricia Hewitt and Estelle Morris are rising stars, along with Gus Macdonald, tipped to replace Byers at the Department of Timidity and Inaction.

There are though significant differences of interpretation. Brown's people see John Prescott's new cabinet office role as something like early retirement. Prezza, they say, is a busted flush, a failed incompetent never again to be trusted with anything important after his pisspoor showing over the rail crisis.

Blair's people, by contrast, are talking the new position up. They say that from now on it will be a beefed-up cabinet office and not the treasury gestapo that will "shadow" other departments and set performance targets for ministers. One in the eye for Gordon, who'll have to start deferring to Prescott as deputy leader. Fat chance. But the oddest thing is that although all the rumours are all complete baloney, simply made up by politicians and journalists with nothing better to do over lunch (Blair really isn't that stupid), these examples of idle speculation are, in a strange way, true – in the sense that they give a fairly accurate account of what really is going to happen after the election. At least, they have as much resemblance to the truth as anything "new" Labour ever says on the record.

'Urquhart'

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

TONY BLAIR's edict that Labour front-benchers must spend their Easter holidays in Britain was particularly upsetting for agriculture minister Lady Hayman.

She had promised to visit her son Jake, who is spending a gap-year in Jamaica. Her pleas to Downing Street were in vain. But, to soften the blow, Blair said that he would ring Jake himself and explain why mummy couldn't come because her country needed her.

Shortly afterwards, one of young Hayman's housemates in Jamaica answered the phone. "Jake, it's Tony Blair for you," he called out, mightily impressed.

Alas! The Prime Minister had reckoned without the ingratitude of youth. Jake, having heard the news from mummy that she wasn't coming, shouted to his housemate, "Tell him I'm not taking the call."

CANDIDATE OF THE RIGHT

Andrew Rosindell

EMBARRASSED though they are by John Townend's antics, William Hague and his chums can at least point out that he won't be a candidate at the general election. But the same cannot be said for Andrew Rosindell, the legendary far-right Tory boy from Essex: he is standing in the marginal constituency of Romford and has a good chance of becoming an MP.

Rosindell, a Jeffrey Archer lookalike, is best known for parading around with a "British bull-dog" as his mascot, denouncing Labour councillors who fail to fly the Union Jack from the town hall and attacking most asylum seekers as "frauds who have come here to take us for a ride". He has also been a busy bee on the international circuit: he is director of the militantly Euro-sceptic European Foundation, which in turn has strong links with the Italian neo-fascist group Alleanza Nazionale (AN), the party of Allessandra Mussolini.

Two years ago, referring specifically to the Alleanza, Hague promised that British Conservatives "are not going to be allied or joining in any way with Italian neo-fascist parties". Not so: when AN's youth wing Azione Giovani launched its website the same year, one of the first people to send a congratulatory email was Andrew Rosindell, who declared himself "very proud to be associated" with it.

Azione Giovani also belongs to the European Young Conservatives (a group formerly chaired by Rosindell), whose members were recently given the opportunity to go canvassing for their hero in Romford. For the benefit of the Italians, a helpful dress code was posted: "Business suits should be worn at the Houses of Parliament. At Conservative Central Office, participants may dress down. When participants are campaigning with the Conservatives in Romford on Sunday, casual clothing should be worn." (Brown shirts and leather trousers, perhaps?)

So concerned have some MPs become at Rosindell's links with Italian neo-fascists that last month three of them tabled an early-day motion in parliament calling on William Hague to remove him as a Conservative candidate. But expulsion would present Hague with problems. For a start, the Conservative leader himself met with leading officers of the European Young Conservatives in the House of Commons on 12 March.

And then there is the small matter of the meeting between Baroness Thatcher, Stefano Massari of Azione Giovani and Gianpiero Cannella, the president of Alleanza Nazionale, which was also held during March. "It was an extraordinary experience," gushed Cannella on the neo-fascists' web-site. "One that we shall remember for a long time... Mrs Thatcher confirmed her full support and her ideal closeness [sic] to the Italian Right wing."

Oh dear, oh dear: will poor Hague have to expel her too?

> As William Hague said recently "Under the next Conservative Government there will be privatisation of the NHS, no retreat to a core service, no compulsory insurance schemes".
>
> *Letter to Herald Express from prospective Conservative parliamentary candidate*

LEFT TURNS

A STINGING review of leftie Liz Davies' book on her experiences on Labour's national executive committee (NEC) appears in the *New Statesman* from former *Express* writer and Fabian Society researcher, Steven Pollard.

As Pollard writes: "Even where there is a case, Davies fluffs it. There is an indictment of Labour's naïve attitude to big business and some of its unsavoury benefactors. But by damning any contact with business, and by attacking everyone involved with the party's fundraising, she destroys the credibility of her argument."

Pollard is a bit of an expert on corporate support, having written two pieces for the "Pfizer Forum" This is an "advertorial programme" launched, according to the drug manufacturing multinational, "to provide a space in which Pfizer could sponsor articles by leading experts on health care, pharmaceuticals, and other public policy issues of interest to a knowledgeable generalist audience".

Pfizer paid for two articles by Pollard. In one "Pfizer Forum" he said Labour should abandon its opposition to private health care and instead back a private, although "mutual", health scheme.

In another Pfizer-sponsored article he also questioned the NHS, revealing that "despite the attachment to an NHS and healthcare funded exclusively out of taxation, voters consider that such a model is in its death throes. They don't welcome that, but they expect it. That means they expect to have to make some kind of regular payment for their future healthcare, either within the NHS (such as for GP visits) or via a 'top up' mechanism, perhaps involving insurance".

Pfizer in turn recommends his work in its policy section, noting that "Stephen Pollard of the UK argues that the British National Health Service is experiencing difficulties in terms of cost and consumer dissatisfaction. He believes a greater role for private financing and provision is called for". Any similarity between Pfizer – which is also one of the drug firms in the dock over medicine prices in Latin America and Africa – and an "unsavoury benefactor" are entirely coincidental, of course.

SCOTCH MIFFED

MICHAEL RUSSELL, the pompous former chief executive of the Scottish National Party, is facing huge embarrassment after his clumsy attempt to discredit a political opponent exploded in his own face.

Russell – now a "list" MSP under the PR system – went to the *Daily Record* last Christmas with a videotape of children playing in the street in the Ayrshire town of Irvine. They were said to be the offspring of Irene Oldfather, the inoffensive Labour woman who had defeated Russell in elections to the Scottish parliament. The result was a lurid front-page splash branding Oldfather "the neighbour from hell".

The only problem was that the story was completely untrue. Furthermore, the pictures taken from Russell's video included the faces of children under 16, in breach of the PCC code and possibly also the human rights act.

Oldfather's neighbours, including the world cycling champion Graeme Obree, rallied round to denounce the *Record*. The paper's management sacked editor Martin Clarke the following day and offered a fulsome apology. But Michael Russell refused to apologise – until Oldfather lost patience and threatened to expose the full sorry tale on the floor of the Scottish parliament. Now Russell has caved in, grovelling to Oldfather and promising to retrieve the offending video from the *Record*.

Meanwhile, Russell has become the SNP's spokesman on education and children – possibly the only holder of that office in any party who has had to apologise for touting videos of under-age nippers to a tabloid newspaper.

TOP *Scottish Mirror* political hackette and former Labour party spin doctor Lorraine Davidson is renowned for her excellent political contacts in Holyrood's coalition government. Not least among these is cabinet minister and business manager to first minister Henry McLeish, Tom McCabe, who also happens to be the lovely Lorraine's partner.

Relationships between McLeish and Chancellor Gordon Brown's powerful friends in the Scottish parliament have been somewhat strained of late. Wendy Alexander, a Brown buddy who is running "new" Labour's general election campaign in Scotland, was reputedly furious when McLeish asked her to add the water industry to her portfolio, throwing an "almighty tantrum" and forcing the first minister to back down.

The row was reported in the *Scottish Mirror* under the headline "Sack Stroppy Wendy". The story penned by Ms Davidson quoted an unnamed Labour source as saying: "Wendy is getting too big for her boots. If she won't do what Henry wants, he should just sack her." Holyrood pundits, meanwhile, are struggling to identify just who could be the source of such informed insider comments...

> **IMPOTANT paperwork belonging to a Birmingham MP has been lost after his assistant's bag was stolen in London.**
>
> *Birmingham Evening Mail*

LEGAL NEWS

THE Saville inquiry is back from its Easter holidays and is getting back to work.

"Work" of course is a loose term. In this case it means sitting from 9.30 to 12 and from 12.45 to 3pm Monday to Thursday, excluding bank holidays.

The inquiry members, who had originally decided to take their Christmas break on 7 December but valiantly ploughed on until 14 December, returned to work on 15 January. Having taken most of April off to compensate, they were only hearing evidence for four days this week before the usual Friday non-sitting day merged into a bank holiday Monday.

Not all the lawyers are able to fulfil this punishing schedule. The most charismatic Bloody Sunday brief, Michael Mansfield QC, is also representing the man alleged to have killed Jill Dando, as well as defending former spy David Shayler.

Cynics might suggest that his ability to participate effectively in three judicial hearings at the same time proves that there's no need for QCs and juniors, etc, and that huge layers of the legal profession could be made redundant without compromising the administration of justice. In fact what it really proves is that British barristers are the best in the world and they deserve more money.

AS POOR Colin Myler, former editor of the *Sunday Mirror* will tell you, the feet of any journalist or broadcaster who publishes anything the judges regard as being in contempt of court are unlikely to touch the ground.

But what happens when such a publication is the work of the judges themselves?

A case in point is "G's" application for judicial review, recently in the court of appeal.

The judgment was published on the court service website on 24 April. It set out the facts of the case and boldly revealed the names of the mother and two-year-old child central to the proceedings.

Whoops! A few lines later on the judgment made it absolutely plain that, due to the sensitive nature of the case and the overwhelming need to "preserve anonymity", the names of the mother and child must not in any circumstances be published.

The rather obvious conflict in the same document between the ban on publishing the names and the publication of the names was apparently lost on the staff of the judge in question, Lord Justice Ward. When the contempt was politely pointed out, the offending names were speedily removed. Fortunately this was done too quickly to allow a case for contempt to be raised against the lord justice or indeed against the man responsible for the court service website, lord chancellor Derry Irvine.

THE youth justice board – home secretary Jack Straw's answer to yob culture and criminality – has devised a novel way to deal with critical inspection reports. It axes them.

Two inspections of the new youth offending teams, which were set up around the country as part of the government's supposedly "joined-up" approach to tackling youth crime, were said to criticise the teams' failure to hit national targets.

The inspection teams reflected the make-up of the new units and consisted of experts from the independent social services inspectorate, Ofsted and the police, prison and probation services.

Far from answering the criticism, though, the response of the youth justice board was to stop four further planned inspections. In addition, Napo, the probation officers' union, has discovered that the youth justice board now plans to choose its own inspectors, who will no doubt treat the new teams more sympathetically.

HATS off to district judge Peter Nuttall, who at Harrogate magistrates' court last week threw out charges of "abusive or insulting behaviour"

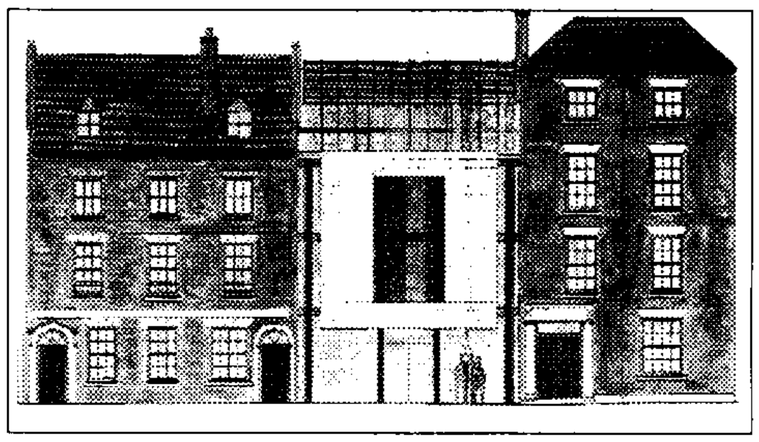
NOOKS and CORNERS

FOOT and mouth is bad enough but the real damage being done to rural England is permanent — and supported by authorities who should know better.

Milborne St Andrew is a village in Dorset which features in some of Hardy's writings and whose centre, around the medieval church, has been declared a conservation area. On one side of this church is a green field surrounded by trees which was once glebe land. This most sensitive and prominent site is now proposed for 35 wretched new houses.

Now houses may or may not be necessary, but the guidelines adopted by North Dorset district council insist that detailed planning permission is required for any new development in a conservation area. In this case, however, only outline permission has been sought — and granted. It is a bargain, you see: the village needs a new school and now it will get one — free of charge! — built by the developer as a thank you for being allowed to build all these houses.

This convenient deal with Messrs Lewis Wyatt Construction, the accident-prone builders of Poole, was promoted by Mr Maitland-Gleed, a local landowner who just happened to be chairman of the school governors and chairman of the district council's planning committee. Since then, this most public-spirited worthy came bottom of the poll in local elections and is no longer on the council — but that is as far as democracy goes in Dorset. Both the district and county councils have ignored the strong feelings in the village against this gratuitous and scandalous housing development.



MY PICTURE shows an exciting design for a new restaurant in Castle Street, Ludlow, by Rod Robinson Associates, architects, of Hereford. The new facade is largely of glass and will stand in fearless contrast to the brick Georgian buildings on either side.

A Georgian house once stood here but, after two decades of dereliction, it was compulsorily purchased by South Shropshire district council who then decided it was dangerous and demolished it. Happily, a restaurant owner now proposes to enhance the old and historic town with a new building rather than building a reproduction of the old one.

Rod Robinson Associates' bold concept was welcomed by Ludlow's Civic Society but, typically, local Luddites who wish to keep the town a fossilised museum are up in arms about it. Yet again, exciting and fresh ideas are being suppressed by the forces of conservatism. Fortunately, the council's far-sighted planning committee has accepted the principle of a new glass building but has requested a revised design. It is eagerly awaited...

Now it is easy to ridicule with irony the clichéd arguments used by modern architects and their acolytes to express their precious little egos regardless of context. I have just done so. But there are serious issues here. It surely is desirable — sometimes — to have new architecture in historic settings; the trouble is that most architects are not up to it: their training has left them unable to understand traditional languages or use traditional materials.

Ludlow is a beautiful town, largely built of a soft red brick but with some painted plaster or stone facades as well as some extravagant half-timbering. Why does a new building have to be of aggressively large sheets of plate glass hung on steel, with a token plane of buff stone wallpaper hanging irrationally over a void?

It is a lie to say that this is the style of our own time and dishonest to use tired old Pevsnerian arguments about the duty to follow the spirit of the age. The truth is that we no longer have any one agreed style. Anything goes. But it is surely possible to design an interesting and unashamedly modern new building in Castle Square, Ludlow, that is not a "pastiche" while using the materials that give this remarkable town its distinctive and special character: brick and timber.

The real point is that the design for the new building is just not very good.

'Piloti'

against Lindis Percy, the 59-year-old anti-nuclear grandmother who allegedly reduced American servicemen at the Menwith Hill tracking station in Yorkshire to blubbering wrecks after trailing a US flag bearing the words "Stop Star Wars" on the ground (*Eye* 1025).

Following the *Eye*'s story the CPS dropped a further charge of "racial harassment" against Ms Percy before the case reached court.

Menwith Hill is one of a number of US bases in Britain where equipment is being prepared for George Bush's missile defence system.

Concerned by the Lindis Percy case, Baroness Miller asked the following question in the House of Lords: "Can Her Majesty's government say whether the flags of other countries are afforded more protection under UK law than that offered under the law of the country they represent?" The question was a good one, following a case in the US (Johnson v. Texas) where the supreme court decided that freedom of expression is more important than the "desecration" of a piece of cloth.

Baroness Miller has yet to receive a reply from the home office. But the answer seems clear: Lindis Percy is up before Fakenham magistrates on 11 May on the same charges she faced in Harrogate, following another one-woman protest at the Deep and Near Space Tracking Centre at Feltwell, Norfolk, where another US flag fell to the ground.

"THE longest-running libel action in the British courts involves a specialist newsletter, *Africa Confidential*, being sued by a group of Saudi businessmen," wrote Brian Whitaker and David Pallister in the *Media Guardian* on 30 April, before proceeding to explain that the defendant is now asking the high court to strike out the case on grounds of extreme delay.

Whitaker and Pallister reached the conclusion that this is Britain's longest ever libel case, kicked off by a writ issued by libel lawyer extraordinaire Peter Carter-Ruck in August 1995, after consulting "several libel lawyers". Unfortunately the *Grauniad's* legal chums appear never to have heard of the libel action between John Stuart Condliffe, a Cornish chartered accountant, and the *Eye*.

The Condliffe libel case is coming up for its eighth anniversary – following a writ issued in July 1993 concerning an article which appeared in the *Eye* in March 1992. Amazingly the solicitors involved in this epic Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce are, er, Peter Carter-Ruck & Partners.

"...and to my son, Gerald, I leave an hereditary heart condition"

FIVE TV

Tonight With Trevor McDonald (ITV)
Hollywood Knives (BBC1)

RECENT reports from America suggest that "gross-out movies" – of the *American Pie* and *There's Something About Mary* kind – are now failing at the box office. Sadly, this encouraging news is now offset by the growth of gross-out TV in Britain.

Tonight With Trevor McDonald focused on predictions that one in four Britons will soon be clinically obese. Super-fatties are a familiar target for TV documentaries. If the wobble footage is sufficiently balanced with doctors and sociologists, filmmakers can be cruel while appearing to be kind.

That trick was played by the film, but the most revolting part of it involved a participant who is now thin. Quite inexplicably, the Duchess of York had been hired as a reporter. *Tonight With Trevor McDonald* is produced by some of the people who used to make *World In Action*. Yet, not embarrassed enough by having the only TV journalist apart from David Frost to have taken a knighthood from the government, they now have minor ex-royals in front of camera.

Apart from exposing the programme to ridicule, there were three immediate problems with hiring Fergie as a reporter, all following from the ludicrous deference given to her because of her title and semi-royal status. The first was that no one had dared to direct her. Her pieces to camera were a hoot, showing none of the mannerisms of a reporter and most resembling in approach the Queen's Christmas broadcast.

When she suggested that "too often obesity is seen as a self-inflicted problem", she had the exact softly oracular sound of Brenda saying: "Christmas is a time for the family." Later she revealed that: "It will be several hours before Yvette comes round from her operation." Hey, what a reporter! Fergie had discovered anaesthesia.

More worryingly, her interviewees were too frightened of her to speak naturally in her presence. Admittedly this sometimes happens with Jennie Bond or Kate Adie, but here you really felt that the contributors to the film believed they were being granted an audience.

A teenager told of the difficulties caused at school by rude remarks about his clinically obese mother. Showing for once the instincts of a reporter, Fergie asked him for an example. He recalled that a lad had once said she must "weigh a million bags of sugar". Now if that really is the worst line he ever heard about his jumbo mum, the state education system is in a much better state than we thought. But what happened is that he felt that the truth would be like swearing at the Queen.

The lingering sense of a state visit being played out wasn't helped by Fergie, whose manner in interviews clearly drew on her memories of visiting schools and hospitals when she was HRH. She appeared to think that a reporter's job is to put the people being questioned at their ease, to encourage them with a supportive remark. "You're kind and a carer and a giver," she challenged one of the contributors. It somehow seems unlikely that Paxman and Humphrys will be copying that technique.

The final problem was that the report couldn't decide which side it was on. Fergie talked with horror of her fat days and, in the voiceovers, consistently described tubbies as an NHS nightmare and national crisis and yet, when meeting any examples, she was simperingly sympathetic. But this reflected a wider conflict in the film. For all its medical evidence and statistical info, the report just wanted to show astonishingly fat people and leave the viewer to wonder how they went to the loo or put their socks on. The creepiness with which McDonald did his back-accouncement "Sarah Ferguson reporting" was frankly sickening.

There was more gross-out TV in **Hollywood Knives**, the kind of documentary you expect to be on ITV but which increasingly turns up on BBC1. Interesting historical material about stars of the past who had surprisingly resorted to cosmetic surgery – John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe – then gave way to a sequence to be watched through the hands: footage from the operating theatre of a face-lift being performed on a bit-part actress and model. Shots of her on the table with her face off were more gruesome than anything in Tarantino.

Obesity and face-lifts: welcome to freak-show TV. Oh – and what have *Tonight With Trevor McDonald* and a fading Hollywood actress got in common? They've both got to the stage where a face-lift wouldn't make any difference anyway.

'Square Eyes'

"I love it! Can you dumb it down for TV!"

SPLIT personalities
Bob Moore

Terry Thomas à Becket

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC

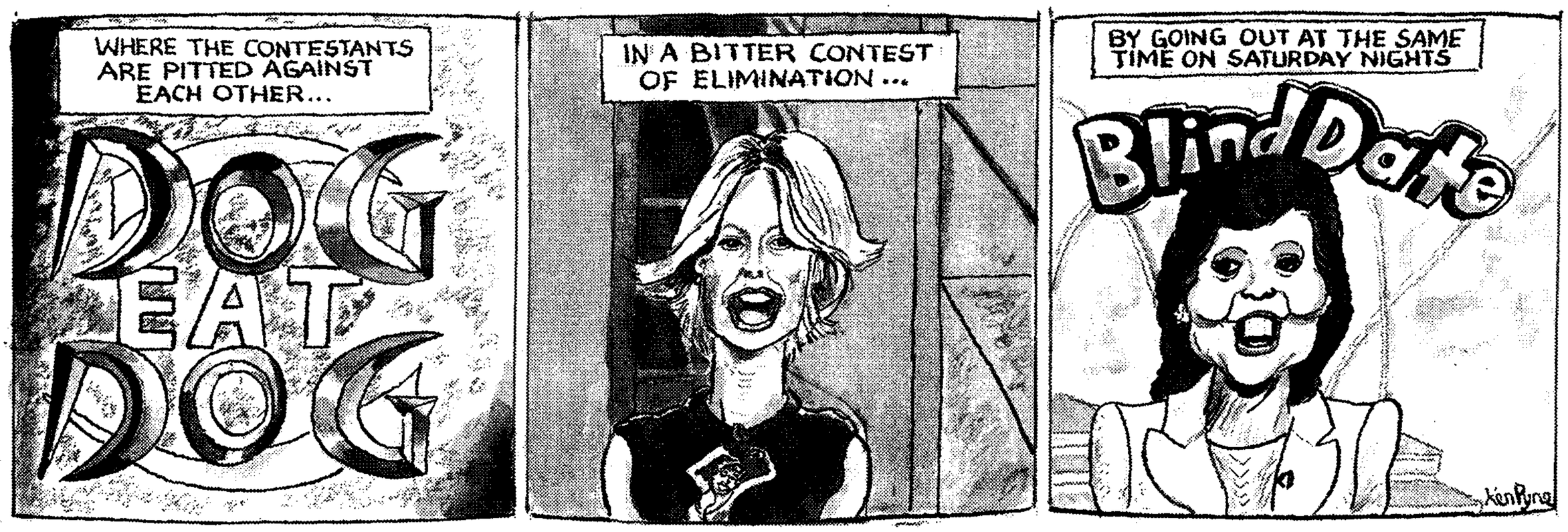
- **Anne Robinson**: For which book did Salman Rushdie win the Booker prize?
- **Contestant**: *The Wind in the Willows*.
- **AR**: What sign of the zodiac is represented by a fish?
- **Contestant**: The Zodiac.
- **AR**: In an orchestra, the leader normally plays which instrument?
- **Contestant**: The triangle.
- **AR**: The four Gospels of the New Testament are attributed to: Matthew, Mark, John and who?
- **Contestant**: Joe.
- **AR**: Which type of steerable balloon is named after the German count who invented it?
- **Contestant**: Dirigible.

Steve Wright in the Afternoon, Radio 2

- **Steve Wright**: In which African country would you find Mt Kilimanjaro?
- **Contestant**: Nepal.
- **SW**: What do you call the indigenous people of Australia?
- **Contestant**: Australians.

National Lottery Jet Set

- **Eamonn Holmes**: Which is the largest country in South America?
- **Contestant**: Nairobi.


WHERE THE CONTESTANTS ARE PITTED AGAINST EACH OTHER...
DOG EAT DOG
IN A BITTER CONTEST OF ELIMINATION ...
BY GOING OUT AT THE SAME TIME ON SATURDAY NIGHTS
Blind Date
Ken Pyne

More Consignia Lookalikes

ALSTOM

DCSA

Vernalis

cafcass

brunelrooms

BRITAIN'S BUSIEST MAN

Sir Christopher Bland

DOES Sir Christopher Bland, British Telecom's new chairman, know how many days there are in a week?

Until the summer Bland will remain chairman of the governors at the BBC, the biggest public broadcasting company in the world, in a job that is meant to occupy him for four days a week. Add to this the four days he is being paid for at BT, and Sir Christopher's eight-day working week seems recklessly in breach of European working time directives.

Though an eight-day week is a departure even for Bland, this poor (very rich) man can't have had many weekends free since 1996 when he took the BBC chairmanship while still chairing NFC plc, a transport and removals firm based in Milton Keynes and formerly known as the National Freight Corporation.

Then, working four days for the Beeb and three for NFC, his seven-day working week would have left him little time to do domestic chores like going to Homebase on a Sunday. But he could at least afford to send someone on his behalf. For the history of NFC and Bland's role in it well illustrates the business ethics of our time and how some reap lottery-style rewards.

NFC was privatised in the early 80s by the Tories. Its new directors soon made it clear the privatisation was not about corporate greed but about democratic control. The workers, mainly lorry drivers, owned 83 percent of the shares.

An elaborate control structure gave them a substantial say in the company's proceedings, and the workers also had a "golden share", effectively a veto.

A whole book was written by the then chairman Sir Peter Thompson to herald this new democratic dawn for private enterprise. But the directors grew impatient with what they regarded as these sentimental attachments to workers' control, and they launched a sustained counter-attack, part of which was the appointment in 1994 of chairman Bland.

Bland enthusiastically joined the campaign to restore control to the people who most deserved it – the directors and shareholders. In a very short time this campaign achieved a historic triumph. The golden share went. So did the democratic control structure. The percentage of shares owned by the workers fell from 83 percent to 7 percent, and is still falling. Thompson's book fell out of favour and was remaindered.

In the summer of 1998 NFC capped this triumph with a judicious sell-off of assets and massive multi-million pay-out to shareholders. One of the main beneficiaries was the chairman. Bland pocketed £660,000 in cash and got hold of another 490,797 in shares. This story was told in full in *Eye* 966.

Bland's salary as NFC chairman at that time was £200,000 for his three-day week, plus the BBC salary. But he probably did not need too much money, since he had already made £9m in a share deal for management he masterminded as chairman of London Weekend Television, plus another £12m when Granada took over LWT (see *Eye* 826, *The Tale of Pigling Bland*).

Last May NFC plc merged with the Ocean Group, and Sir Christopher stepped down as chairman. Now he says he is going to "double up" at the Beeb and BT – a novel arrangement that seems to satisfy BBC director general Greg Dyke. But then Dyke also made many millions out of the management share bonanza at LWT and is a firm believer in the age-old adage that such share millionaires should stick together.

MEDIA NEWS

"BBC4 has ideals... BBC4 is a conversation..." So says the publicity blurb for the launch of the Beeb's latest digital TV channel.

"BBC4 is the Tate Modern of British broadcasting", it continues – suggesting that it will use a lot of licence-payers' money and look flash but still be home to large amounts of rubbish.

BBC4 suffers from the same difficulty as the Beeb's other digital offerings. Programme budgets (as opposed to marketing ones) are tiny and producers with any talent are going to sell their best proposals to the channels that licence-payers actually watch – BBC1 and 2. That's the whole point of public service broadcasting.

This leaves a vacuum at production level; and in the digital age, any old cheap, unadventurous pap will do. Proposals for BBC4 include: *My Own Obit*, something with a "*Through the Keyhole*-style approach"; a "TV version of *Desert Island Discs*"; "video diaries" (always cheap); and the not very original "inside the mind of..."

The only new thing about BBC4 is that it will poach ideas from radio. Radio Four producers are already being approached (so far with little success) and there's a revealing list of seminars available to help them adjust to the world of telly – "what we can learn from radio successes" and "how to adapt radio formats and ideas for TV" being but two of the treats on offer.

GOING LIVE

BBC NEWS 24 went live to Jackie Rowland covering the launch in Kazakhstan of the Russian rocket with a tourist on board.

"It looks as though the launch is going to plan," she revealed over pictures of the launch going to plan. "We can only imagine the atmosphere inside..." Indeed she could only imagine it being a full 1,000 miles away in Moscow.

Plugged In

It was great stuff, the sort of thing that terrestrial television cannot bring us, the sort of thing that makes us pay our fees to Sky with pleasure...

...It was a splendid day for England cricket and a splendid day for Sky as well. They were there. So were we. And that's what the telly is for.

SIMON BARNES
***The Times** (prop. R. Murdoch)*

Nominated by Theo Williams.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

LUVVIES

"We're the lovers of love, you know, and we're special. We're not part of this world. You can't define us in comparison with other women."

JULIETTE BINOCHE
Eastern Daily Press

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

WHEN the Kirov Opera and Ballet take up what is likely to become an annual summer residence at Covent Garden in June and July, it will be applauded by audiences who remember the extraordinary success of last year's Kirov visit. For many London opera-goers it was the highlight of the whole season.

But whether British-based musicians will be cheering in the aisles is doubtful. Eastern European orchestras and instrumental groups are poised to become the cultural equivalent of asylum-seekers, stealing work from local players by undercutting their fees. And the latest example, which will send a shiver down the spines of orchestral managements throughout the British Isles, is soon to happen at the Wexford Opera Festival which has always used the services of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland – owned and run by the Irish broadcasting organisation, RTE.

Wexford has just announced that, after failing to agree "acceptable" terms with the NSOI, it is dispensing with the orchestra's services. Instead, this hitherto conspicuously patriotic festival will use... the Orchestra of Belarus, imported for a fraction of the cost.

This leaves the RTE in something of a fix. Not only does it lose its yearly Wexford revenue; it loses the right to free broadcasts of the Wexford operas, and its flagship band is left with eight disastrously blank weeks in its 2001 diary. Rumours of summer cutbacks and lay-offs are circulating like an agricultural disease in Dublin.

NEWS that the sex-kittens of the quasi-classical music industry, the Bond Girls, are to front this year's Classical Brit Awards is depressing but not unexpected.

The awards have never had much claim to seriousness or substance. And their credibility for this year has been totally destroyed by the discovery that the organisers couldn't even deliver the right voting information to the so-called "academy" of judges. One of the few substantial-sounding options on the shortlist (standing out among the greatest hits of Charlotte Church and Russell Watson) is Sir Simon Rattle's release of Mahler's 1st Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Unfortunately, there is no such disc. It will be interesting to see who votes for it.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

DOWN ON THE FARM

Foot and Mouth

IF ONE branch of government is enjoying almost total success in the foot-and-mouth crisis it is the Alastair Campbell spin machine — or what the army in Cumbria contemptuously calls "our friends from the central office of information".

For two months No 10 has been trying to keep the tightest grip on the "story" being fed to the media. And with a handful of honourable exceptions, the gullible London-centred hacks have cheerfully recycled the lies.

The basic Campbell line is that the epidemic started in that pig farm at Heddon; that MAFF has now got it so well in hand that it is possible to ease up on the mass-slaughter (and spare little Phoenix the calf); and that the precise date on which scientists now predict the epidemic will be completely over is, by pure coincidence, 7 June.

An instance of how wonderfully the hacks are being led to miss the point was the way the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* dutifully led their front pages with yet another recycling of the Heddon pig farm story. This was put out as counter-spin to an outburst from a senior MAFF vet in Northumberland, Stuart Renton, who broke ranks to say that very few MAFF vets any longer believe that Heddon was the start of the outbreak. Across the country they had seen far too many "old foot-and-mouth sores" on sheep to believe the disease had not been around for much longer.

Mr Renton was so angry at the way he and his fellow vets were being silenced (the only spokesmen officially permitted to speak to the media are farms minister Nick Brown; No 10's tame "chief scientist" David King; MAFF's press office; and, of course, No 10), that he decided he could no longer remain quiet. But naturally his blow for truth was buried.

Another triumph for spin was the line that the epidemic is now so firmly under control that, following its "saving" of the dewy-eyed little calf, a merciful government is now easing up on the mass-killing of animals. What the hacks missed was that this change of policy (already planned before the happy coincidence of little Phoenix) only applies to cattle. The wholesale destruction of sheep in the north of England, south-west Scotland, the Welsh borders and Devon is now greater than ever, following the MAFFia-NFU hidden agenda that "Britain has too many sheep and too many small farmers". FMD is viewed as a heaven-sent chance to eliminate large numbers of both forever.

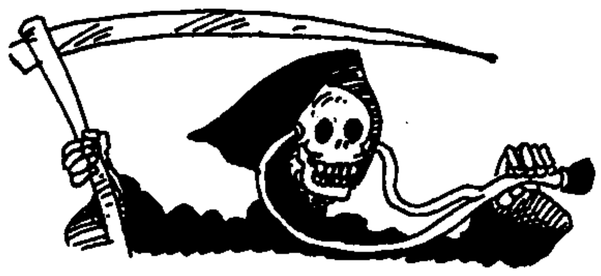
Most brazen of all has been how No 10 has co-opted Prof Roy Anderson's Imperial College computer to show the government's policies now working so brilliantly that the epidemic will come to an end on precisely 7 June. The key to this is to have sneaked in a whole series of changes to the way the figures are compiled. Hundreds of FMD cases which previously would have swelled the daily outbreak totals have now been moved into different categories which no longer show up on the headline graph. The government's own foot-and-mouth research centre at Pirbright is in uproar about this shameless manipulation of the figures and its two senior figures, Dr Alex Donaldson and Dr Paul Kitching, are spitting blood.

The crisis is now being driven with only one thing in mind: that 7 June election date. Whether Alastair Campbell can control the virus itself is another matter.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Great Moments In British History No. 94

The Relief Of Maff



DOING THE ROUNDS

GP anyone?

MAY 1 was — in case you missed it — National Doctor Day. Instigated by the trade mag Doctor, it was intended to be a day of action to politicise the "crisis of morale" in general practice.

One hundred and fifty GPs in Dudley "threatened" to close their surgeries en masse, as did the entire GP population of Weston-super-Mare. I suspect most of them popped out at tea time to wave a damp placard around the practice car park before popping back in again for evening surgery, but the media grumbling has at least put the wind up the British Medical Association and the department of health.

The GP committee of the BMA has until recently bent over backwards to stay chummy with "new" Labour, but sensing the threat of cancelled subscriptions it has decided to play the joker — it's infamous "Are you willing to consider resigning?" ballot, last wheeled out in 1975.

This is not seen legally as inviting industrial action because resignation is any individual's right, but the government knows that no matter how many "yes" votes are collected, it'll never happen. Doctors are a very disparate and individualistic group, many are mortgaged up to the hilt and most aren't trained to do anything else. And the prospect of setting up a surgery from scratch as a private GP is even less tempting than staying in the NHS.

The BMA may think it's being tough, but to force the issue would be a massive embarrassment. GPs have been having crises of morale ever since MD started out as one in 1990, but its fair to say that the cumulative effects of the untested reforms of successive governments are now too much for some to bear.

In the Avon practice I recently worked in, two of the six partners have had major episodes of mental illness in the last two years and the others confess to coming close to burn out. Even medical students are astute enough to spot a bum career choice and — at a conservative estimate — the current workforce is about 10,000 short to deliver the government's vision of a primary care-led NHS where trusts of GPs hold 75 percent of the purse strings.

Alas, many GPs don't want to hold purse strings but would far rather simply have more time to spend with patients. Most practices are still 1950s corner shops without the expertise or resources to cope with the government and GMC's 21st century demands. Professional development plans, personal learning plans, health improvement plans, practice inspection... staff appraisal, clinical governance, revalidation, re-accreditation, NICE guidelines, disease frameworks and the compulsory reporting of every error to the National Patient Safety Agency. Oh – and then there are patients to see. Ruth Chambers, an academic who runs management training workshops for doctors claims it is not uncommon for doctors to break down in tears when they realise the enormity of what's expected of them.

This isn't to say that GPs don't agree with the need for modernisation and the sentiments of the government's NHS plan — many of them do – but they haven't a hope in hell of delivering in time to save health secretary Alan Milburn's career. Most will try reasonably hard, but health minister John Denham's pledge that the NHS plan does not mean any GP will have to work harder is as ludicrous as the BMA's threat of mass resignation.

Instead of giving up, new doctors are just refusing to work full time. Sixty percent of medical graduates are now women and most work half time or less within five years of qualifying. And an increasing proportion of male doctors are also opting for part time working. So for every GP who retires, health secretary Alan Milburn needs to find two replacements just to keep the status quo. Then find another 10,000 extra. Fat chance. Tony Blair might think he can tempt doctors into general practice with a £5,000 "golden hello" and keep them dead at the wheel until 65 with a similarly generous "golden goodbye". But in truth, money isn't the issue. It's an impossible job. So impossible that I've given up... and gone back to hospital medicine.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on buck-passing

A DOCUMENT leaked to the *Eye* last week shows how Railtrack's incompetence is significantly increasing the risk of drivers being confused on Britain's busiest railway.

Drivers are briefed on any temporary speed limits applying to their route through a routine weekly notice. They are allotted time to assimilate the information as they sign on. A "late notice" is also circulated to drivers, detailing exceptional circumstances where one or two speed limits have been changed at short notice. When British Rail was in charge, a late notice with more than a handful of instructions was frowned on and the people responsible had to provide watertight justification.

The leaked late notice to Virgin Trains' drivers is dated 19 April and contains no fewer than 89 amendments for drivers to acknowledge on the main west-coast line from Euston to Glasgow. Even worse, one section described vaguely as "south of Madeley", near Crewe, is in such disarray that drivers on all tracks are simply told to "contact the controlling signal box immediately" to receive the latest news. ("South of Madeley" means all the way to Euston.)

At one signal which drivers have "apparently missed" several times — indicating it is poorly arranged — Railtrack puts the onus on drivers to beware, instead of Railtrack changing the signal head to improve visibility.

The last-minute restrictions are due to a litany of track defects. Many entries cancel instructions given in the weekly notice; drivers are expected to absorb the weekly notice, then forget numerous parts of it while absorbing yet more restrictions. The scope for driver error is greatly increased. The situation smacks of post-Hatfield paranoia, with contractors and managers making knee-jerk responses to the changing situation instead of assessing the risks properly.

That does little to reduce the risk of accidents but typifies the arse-covering culture that pervades railway safety after privatisation. If a driver makes a serious mistake out of confusion, Railtrack managers will produce the relevant pieces of paper showing that they shifted the responsibility down to the driver — in whom Inspector Knacker would no doubt be taking a keen interest.

Strategy what strategy?

THE strategic rail authority (SRA) hasn't got round to devising a strategy for railways — but it *does* have a strategy for getting the government off the hook in the forthcoming general election.

Ten days after the SRA's "strategic agenda" ruled out sensible changes to the railway's structure (*Eye* 1024), the SRA issued performance statistics under the headline: "Performance Improves Across Rail Network". Some mistake surely? The figures showed that only 28.6 percent of Virgin Cross Country services arrived on time in January and 63.4 percent of Gatwick Express services. Not one franchise, other than the tiny Isle of Wight line, had achieved 90 percent punctuality in January... or December... or November... or October. How could such a shambles be construed as an improvement?

Er, by moving the goalposts. Previously the SRA and Opraf measured performance by comparing latest data with the corresponding time the previous year. But practically all operators were performing better a year ago than now. Rather than present data confirming that the system needs massive intervention, the SRA dropped the standard comparison and compared January's figures with December's. Instead of explaining most of the facts behind the figures, it chose to speculate that other operators should achieve 90 percent punctuality soon, "as the network continues to recover from the post-Hatfield trough".

Whoops! When the figures for February were released last month, half the franchises showed no improvement from January, even though the floods and the worst of the post-Hatfield panic were over.

Yet again no franchises managed 90 percent punctuality (except Island Line). Unperturbed, the SRA moved the goalposts again, focusing on the difference between February and December and declaring: "The marked improvement since the Hatfield accident can be seen." Hmm.

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

MOLE IN A HOLE

SINCE 1988 people in the Norfolk village of Loddon have been protesting about the pollution of their homes by emissions from Ex-Press Plastics, a factory making moulded body parts for vehicles and aircraft.

As well they might: the fumes contain the chemical styrene, which causes eye irritation, nausea and depression and is a carcinogen which "may cause leukaemia", says the US agency for toxic substances and disease registry.

Hardly surprising, then, that residents objected with a 200-signature petition when the then-Conservative South Norfolk district council gave Ex-Press permission to move to Loddon. The permission was conditional on landscaping, noise limitation and odour filtration works being done. Only the noise control was ever introduced.

Protesters claim that the council's environmental health department, headed by Granville Smith, has been less than vigorous in carrying out its responsibility under the environmental protection act 1990 to impose tighter controls on Ex-Press's emissions. The company, backed by Mr Smith's department, claims it would be prohibitively expensive to eliminate the smell of styrene, and hides behind a clause in the act allowing it to employ the "best available techniques not entailing excessive cost".

Mr Smith's deputy Gerry Mole tells the *Eye*: "There is no health risk. There's a smell from time to time, but it's not a nuisance. If you live near an industrial estate you can't expect your quality of life to be the same as somewhere else." If only every "environmental health officer" took such a commonsense view! Yet it is not one shared by cancer expert Dr Ian Gibson, Labour MP for Norwich North, former dean of biology at the university of East Anglia.

He told the *Eye*: "Styrene, a known carcinogen, is produced by this factory and affects both those living outside and working in the factory. Cancer doesn't develop overnight. This company, operating in a small village, is getting away with murder."

Despairing of getting any action out of the council, now controlled by the Lib Dems, protesters have turned to their own MP, John MacGregor, the man whose triumphs as a minister under John Major included the privatisation of British Rail and such decisive handling of the BSE crisis. MacGregor assures residents "I'll write to Granville" — but nothing happens.

PS: Ex-Press Plastics' biggest client is DAF Trucks.

PPS: The House of Commons register of members' interests records that one of MacGregor's "remunerated directorships" is on the supervisory board of, er, DAF Trucks NV.

● **LARNE borough council in Northern Ireland has decided against prosecuting a dump owner over licensing breaches. The offender was none other than Roy Beggs senior, long-serving Larne councillor and Official Unionist MP for East Antrim. Tonnes of unapproved materials, including street sweepings and bonfire debris, were dumped on Beggs's tip. Tests have shown "high strength" leachate pollution in the area. A secret council report concluded that there was "sufficient evidence" to instigate legal proceedings. But it concluded that prosecution was "not in the public interest". This had nothing to do with the fact that most of the offending rubbish had been tipped by, er, Larne council.**

TALL STOREYS

ONE of the ways bent Hackney councillors Isaac Leibowitz and Zev Lieberman, jailed last month in Britain's biggest vote-rigging conspiracy, subverted the democratic process at the 1998 council elections was by registering phantom voters at phoney addresses.

One of these was 16 Lampard Grove, N16 - actually a semi-derelict garage with no windows, no services and no occupants in the back garden of a house owned by Euroshield Enterprises, a family company of which Leibowitz is a director.

Tory Leibowitz and Lieberman, a Lib-Dem, both sat on the Stamford Hill planning committee (*Eyes passim*) with Hackney's mayor Joe Lobenstein. In August last year, in Loebenstein's absence, it considered an application to add a storey to the old garage at 16 Lampard Grove and convert it into a maisonette. Leibowitz declared an "insignificant non-pecuniary interest". Officers had strongly recommended refusal ("excessive scale... inappropriate positioning... over-development..."), but the application was mysteriously referred to the committee at the request of Tory councillor Vernon Williams — and passed.Last month Williams was kicked off the council for non-attendance.

A report by borough solicitor Chris Hinde into the Stamford Hill committee, initiated after the *Eye* raised concerns about corruption in 1999, has been on the desk of Hackney's managing director Max Caller for more than six months. It is due to be considered by the council's new standards committee in June. Or perhaps not: the committee, set up last year, is still "training" and hasn't managed to consider anything yet.

Meanwhile there are three by-elections due in Hackney — to elect replacements for the two fraudsters and for Williams, who was too lazy to represent his electors but managed to find the time to facilitate planning applications for his crooked pal. However, the by-elections are not about to happen just yet, according to the *Hackney Gazette*, "because of the foot-and-mouth crisis". So *that's* what that awful smell is!

Dome Of The North

WITH just over a year to go before Manchester hosts the 2002 Commonwealth Games (that nobody else bid for) disaster looms.

In recent weeks two of the games' leading organisers have quit in mysterious circumstances. Sports director Gerry Montgomery went in mid-March, citing the old favourite of wanting to spend more time with his family. A day later special projects director Tom Mullarkey, in charge of the opening and closing ceremonies, was sacked in bizarre circumstances. As the day drew to a close there was a fire alarm at the games HQ and everyone was obliged to evacuate the building. While staff milled around outside Mullarkey received a call on his mobile asking him to go back inside alone. When the rest of the staff returned 15 minutes later they found Mullarkey gone and his desk cleared. The organisers refuse to explain why the men quit. At least both got out in time.

For years Manchester councillors and local dignitaries have pledged that the games would not lose money and promised taxpayers that they would not pay for the shortfall. They have even rubbished *Eye* stories suggesting otherwise. Now that the games are drawing near, the line has changed. Of course the games will lose money — between £15m and £60m — and of course the taxpayer will have to dig deep. But at least, say organisers, the losses will be much less than those sustained by the, er, dome.

The stadium which will host the games is unbuilt as yet and the Metrolink line which would have brought sports fans to the stadium (itself situated in one of the least accessible parts of town) will not be ready in time for the games. Manchester bigwigs went to Sydney to learn from their success, part of which involved moving spectators by tram. Yet the Manchester organisers have come home and abandoned their tram plans. Instead, nearly £1m will be spent on cleaning up a derelict canal so that spectators can cycle or walk from the city centre along the towpath.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

YOUR HANDS ARE RED RAW, QUIN
I THOUGHT I'D WARNED YOU AGAINST MANUAL LABOUR. YOU SIMPLY DON'T HAVE THE CONSTITUTION FOR IT
LOOK, JEZ, I KNEW THE RISKS WHEN I SIGNED UP FOR CLASSICAL GUITAR LESSONS

GOING DUTCH

RED FACES at Bath and North East Somerset council following the demise of Paul Simons, director of the city's very own millennium white elephant, the £24m Bath Spa project (see *Eye* 1022).

He has been asked to step aside and "assist with a number of other key programmes and strategic initiatives" — one of which is thought to be sorting out a lucrative pay-off so he can leave in a couple of months. The fact that he has presided over a project which should have opened in January 2000 and is now nearly three years behind schedule and heading for twice the original cost should assure him of a generous package.

Meanwhile an internal inquiry has begun into how the council came to post on its website confidential documents concerning a crucial meeting between the council and the millennium commission (MC) earlier this year. At the meeting Simons urged the MC to allow the council to reappoint the Dutch firm TDC as its private partner, even though TDC had twice failed to meet payment deadlines. This worried the commission, which wanted the council to seek a new partner. A letter which appeared on the website from Douglas Weston, the MC's director of project, described Simons' notes of the meeting as "incomplete and inaccurate... subjective... [and] potentially misleading".

● **SO farewell, then, Colin Wedd, the third leader of Doncaster council in a row to be arrested in connection with alleged expenses fiddles. Wedd was appointed in 1998 at the command of Labour's regional organiser Nan Sloane after the arrest of previous incumbent Malcolm Glover, which followed hard on a ringing personal endorsement from, er, Tony Blair. The latest arrest prompted chief executive David Marlow to issue a desperate statement: "I would like to reassure the people of Doncaster that it's business as usual at the council." From all around came the chorus: "Too bloody right, mate!"**

Letters

Lethal error

Sir,

Oh dear. If you're going to be sniffy and try to correct Anne Robinson in the Weakest Link, you'd better get your facts right. There have been four Lethal Weapon films, so she was in fact correct to say that there'd been three sequels. You are the weakest Eye, goodbye!

STEVE SIMMONDS,

Via e-mail.

● *Thanks to the other 478 readers who wrote or e-mailed to point out our embarrassing mistake.*

Parky response

Sir,

Square Eyes says Ulrika Jonsson was booked for Parkinson as a replacement for Alastair McGowan who was "cup tied" by my producer because he had already appeared on John Inverdale's programme.

Had he watched the show he would have seen both Ulrika and Alastair being interviewed and would have realised his story was a load of bollocks.

Normally I wouldn't bother with such a tara-diddle except Square Eyes goes on to review my interview with the fragrant Ulrika. How could he if he didn't watch the show?

It's no good him pretending he watched Ulrika and then switched off because Alastair was billed immediately before Ulrika was introduced.

What is going on?

I await an explanation from Square Eyes. Was he pissed or what? We must be told.

Sincerely,
MICHAEL PARKINSON,

London W1.

● *Square Eyes says he wasn't pissed, but it was a bad mistake and he was embarrassingly wrong about McGowan. He adds, in his defence, that he* **did** *watch the Ulrika interview live at home, switching to Parkinson on BBC1 from BBC2 in time to find her coming down the stairs but not in time to see the previous announcement by the host about McGowan. He then watched the Ulrika segment in order to write about her, but switched over to BBC2 again during the Corrs, and wrongly assumed that Ulrika had replaced McGowan on the programme. (Radio Times for 13 April billed the guests as John Hurt, The Corrs and Alastair McGowan only.) He offers his apologies for this error.*

He also adds less humbly that the **real** *situation, two guests plugging forthcoming BBC1 programmes, does tend to reinforce his worry that Parkinson "is now perilously close to becoming an in-house trail".*

Deep trouble

Sir,

Re: Michael Barrymore. I trust that, due to the number of complaints you receive, you will not have space to print this letter.

I have no idea whether Michael Barrymore was at fault in respect of the drowning in his swimming pool, but the boy who died will undoubtedly have a family, who can only have been distressed by your tasteless joke.

Yours faithfully,
G.W. BURTON,

Egham, Surrey.

Girl trouble

Sir,

Re: Lunchtime O'Boulez. Lotte was Dr Otto Klemperer's daughter, not his wife.

NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD.

Political weekly

Sir,

You printed last week that The Spectator has abandoned any pretence of journalists' independence by mailing a subscription offer which included a donation to the Conservative Party. The magazine made exactly the same offer of a subscription and donation package to both Labour and the Liberal Democrat headquarters at the same time. Strangely enough, only the Conservatives came back to us.

Sincerely yours,
KIMBERLY FORTIER,

Publisher and CEO, The Spectator.

Keeping abreast

Sir,

Re: American strippers being made to wear "G-strings and pasties". "Pasties" is not a misspelling of "panties". Pasties are those tassel-type things which are attached to cover the nipples.

With apologies for being so sad as to bother to point this out.

JOHN TURNBULL,

Via e-mail.

Piers pressure

Sir,

Thank you so much for keeping us up to date with the fascinating exploits of Piers Morgan. I used to follow his adventures in the Guardian Diary, but sadly they have not reported any of them for some time now. I realise Matthew Norman is probably too busy with all his other work, but I would have thought his little helper, Marina Hyde, could have rooted around to discover some of Mr Morgan's doings. Never mind, at least there's still the Eye.

H.N. SEEKE,

London.

Out of Africa

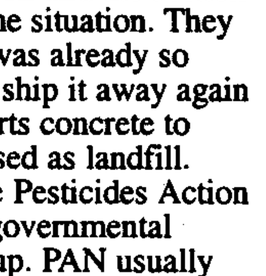
Sir,

I have long since known that the English know very little about Wales, but I doubt your magazine would ever arrive here if it wasn't for the Royal Mail's commonsense.
I enclose weekly label.

DAFYDD R JONES
HIGHCLIFFE
PRIESTLEY ROAD
CAERNARFON
GWYNEDD LL55 1HP BOTSWANA

Letter from **Brussels**

from Our Own Correspondent



UNTIL a few months ago a congealed mass of dangerous fungicide gifted by us in the European Union (EU) to Rwanda lay unprotected in our compound near the capital, Kigali. It has since disappeared, but there is no reason to applaud its removal.

Despite the allocation of half a million euros of European taxpayers' money (around £300,000) for a responsible clean-up, the entire chemical cocktail was bulldozed into a pit by a local contractor for a small fee, leaving the poisons in the ground and the money unaccounted for.

In 1995 the EU's food security unit, a department responsible for dealing with food emergencies in developing countries, had the bright idea of sending over 200 tonnes of the coffee fungicide, Mancozeb, to Rwanda's cacao plantations, at a cost of some 649,500 ecus. Instead of being put to good use, the fungicide was stored carelessly – Mancozeb combusts spontaneously when damp, and Rwanda has a very wet climate – and the damaged and exposed chemicals were left to filter into the local environment and water supply where they can cause birth defects, skin irritations and cancer.

Just one year later the EU sent experts from the UN food and agriculture organisation and the French ministry of agriculture to inspect the situation. They recommended that the Mancozeb was already so unstable it would be impossible to ship it away again and should be mixed with three parts concrete to every one part of Mancozeb and used as landfill.

In 1997 the EU approached the Pesticides Action Network (PAN), a small UK non-governmental organisation, to oversee the clean-up. PAN usually deals only with policy issues, but decided to make an exception in this case, and sent its own experts to assess the damage. They concluded that the fungicide stockpile was so dangerous it should be mixed with ten parts concrete, making the cost and extent of the disposal operation even greater.

Shortly after PAN submitted its proposal, it received a reply from the EU's head of development, Uwe Werblow, stating that its involvement was no longer required as the Rwandan government had awarded the contract to a local company. PAN was puzzled by this response as there is only one company in the whole of Africa with the necessary technology to dispose of Mancozeb, and it is based in South Africa.

In November 1997 the Belgian green politician and head of the European Free Alliance, Paul Lannoye, asked what had become of the Mancozeb. His question was not answered in full until late last year, when it transpired that the fungicide had been buried unsafely outside Kigali, where it is liable to leak into the water supply. The mayor of Kigali is so worried he has called for soil tests to assess the damage caused by this thoughtful EU donation.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"A lot of actresses have complained that as they get older the parts dry up."
JIMMY YOUNG, Radio 2
(Mrs M.A. Zebedee)

"...it seems the welfare of animals has been put on the back-burner."
Welsh RSPCA Office, Radio 5 Live
(Richard Bond)

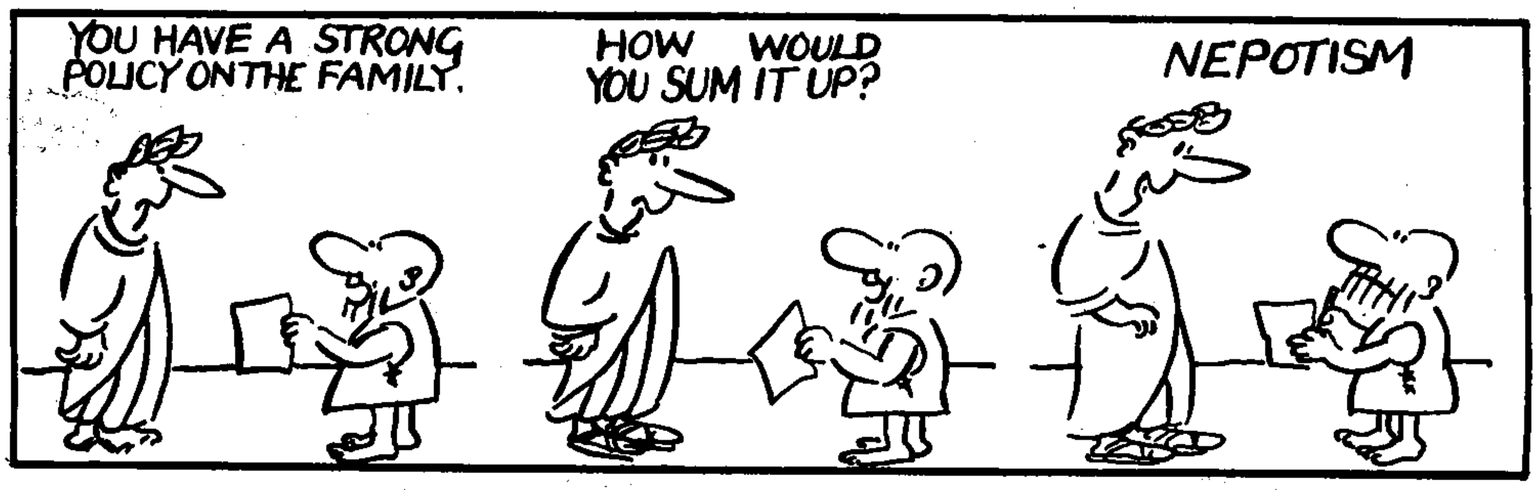
"This circuit has everything. It's got gradients — both uphill and downhill."
MURRAY WALKER, ITV
(Simon Linford)

"That's his strength — he invariably misses anything easy."
JOHN VIRGO, BBC2
(Elyot Turner)

"People talk about the altitude, but you've got to remember he's been on American time."
FRANK MALONEY (Lennox Lewis's manager), BBC Online
(Peter Reeve)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

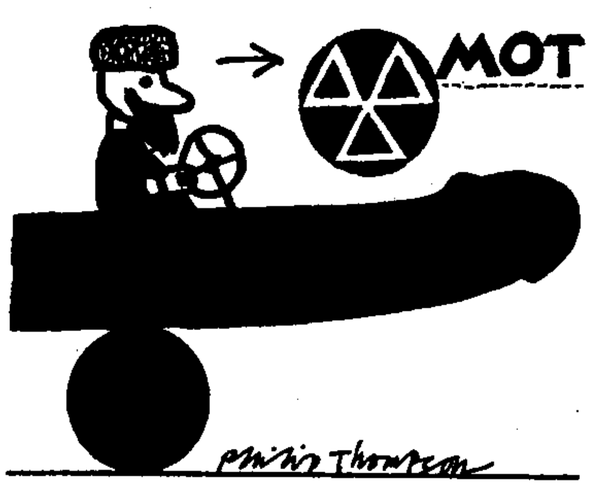


FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● *"The penis is a very complicated organ," explained Professor Pyotr Shcheplev as he showed reporters around the Muzhskaya Skoraya Pomoshch clinic. "It has many nuances and peculiarities that aren't generally known. There's a specific science for women's sexual organs, but there's no analogous specialist for the male organs, so my department is trying to balance things out, by developing the science of andrology."*

Professor Shcheplev, who is President of the Russian Association of Andrologists, then described some of the many cases with which he has dealt. "Most penile injuries are self-inflicted. One common problem is a broken or fractured penis, usually caused when a woman tries to jump on her partner and misses. There's a loud popping sound when the corposa cavernosa is ruptured, and it's extremely painful, and can affect the urinary tract. One old folk's tale is that if a bride places a ring on her husband's penis, he will perform well until old age. We get a lot of people here who've tried that, and can't get the ring off, because their erection refuses to go down. That's potentially very dangerous, because if action is not taken within four to six hours, the penis tissue begins to suffocate because of a lack of oxygen, and the patient will become impotent. We also do implants of prosthetic penises, because they



have their hiccups, and can break or split. Just like a car, they need a regular checkup." (Moscow Times, 13/3/01. Spotter: Miss C Kilburn)

— ● —

● "We're currently developing a whole range of predictive underwear," Professor Tyler of The Jensen Institute told a press conference in Baltimore, "because interactive clothing will definitely be a growth area over the next decade. At the moment, we're working on panties, diapers, tampons, and various other personal-care products, all of which can tell the wearer about their own bodies. In particular, we've just developed a panty liner that can predict menstruation two hours before the flow starts. And it also doubles as a home pregnancy kit.

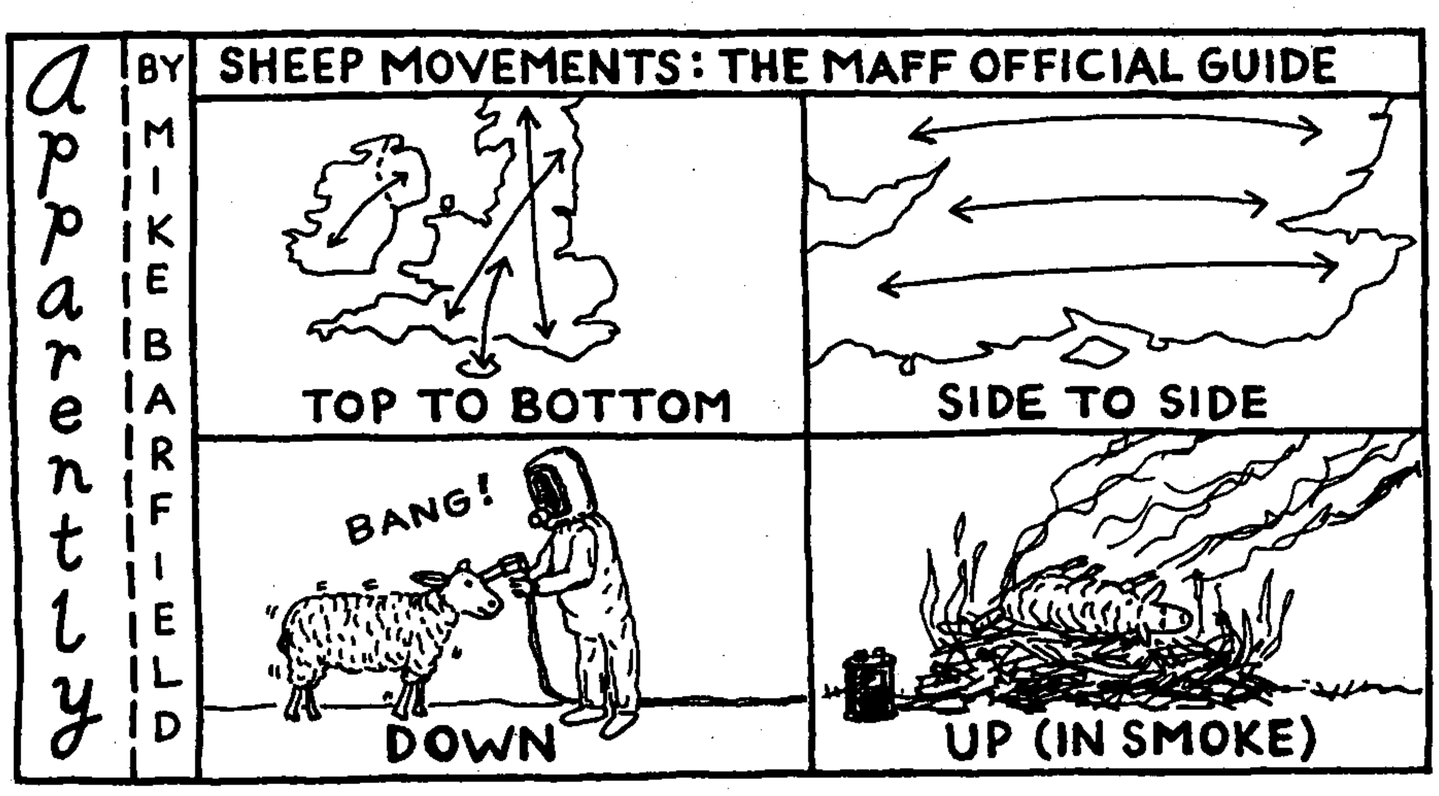
"Currently, we're mostly using chemical sensors that can detect minute changes in pressure, motion, temperature, enzymes, blood, bacteria, and pH levels. Next year, we hope to be testing interactive diapers that will change colour when they detect an impending bowel movement, or even set off a microchip recorded audio alarm telling the parents "it's time to get baby to the potty." They'll also give advance warning when a rash or infection is developing, so preventative action can be taken. Believe me, this may sound far-fetched now, but in ten years time, everyone will be using these products." *(Baltimore Courier, 16/2/01. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

— ● —

● **"I'm stunned and amazed by this negative reaction to our campaign," confessed Mike Hutcheson of Saatchi & Saatchi as he addressed reporters in Auckland, New Zealand. "Our 'Auckland A' slogan was starting to catch on, and people were starting to use the 'Big A' hand signal as a greeting. But now we've heard about the sign's other meanings, we'll obviously have to reconsider our strategy."**

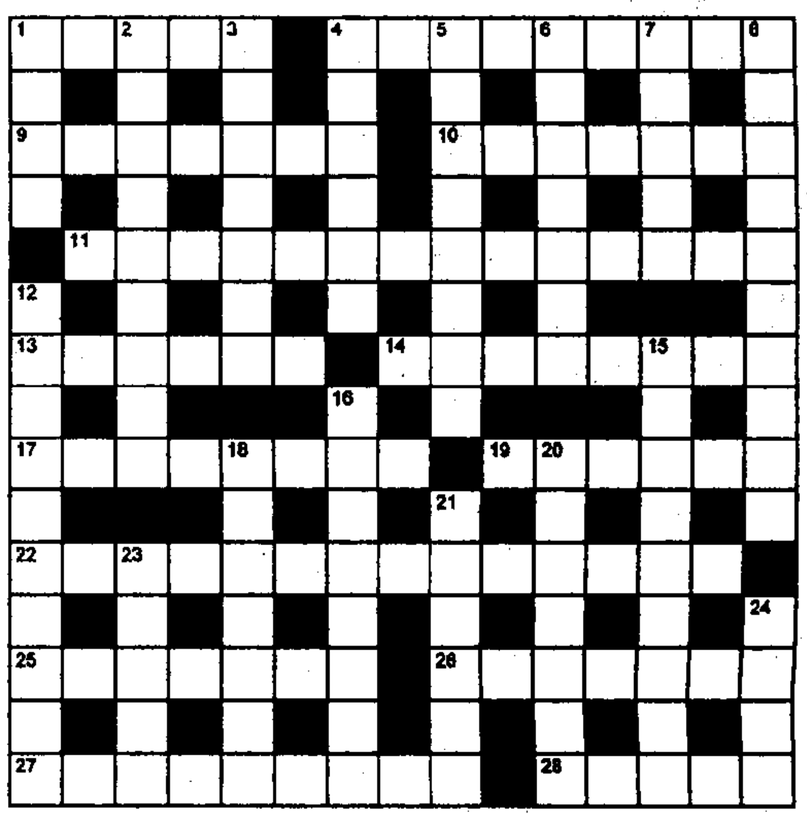
Hutcheson was forced to defend his campaign (intended to foster civic pride among Aucklanders) after protests were received from the Deaf Association of New Zealand and various women's groups. "This two-handed 'A' shape they're asking local people to use as a greeting is the internationally-recognised symbol for a vagina," complained Anne Speir, chairwoman of the Hero Trust. "Some women also use it to mean that they're fully lesbian, but vagina is the most common translation. Feminists have been using it since the early 70s, and these advertising people have no right to steal it."

The use of the A-shape (made with the crossed forefingers and thumbs of both hands) was also attacked by a spokeswoman for the Deaf Association. "It closely resembles the deaf sign for the Aids disease," she pointed out, "and that's surely not the image that the city council wants to foster, is it? Aids-riddled lesbians in New Zealand's number one port? I think not." *(New Zealand Herald, 23/3/01. Spotter: Paul Clark)*



EYE CROSSWORD 182

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Cocaine? The bloke's son's game (5)
4 Alternative live comic's caught out atrocious ex-president (9)
9 The sort to boast "I give great oral sex" (3-4)
10 Blair's lot, suffering reverse, can change Environment no.1 to achieve stability (7)
11 See 28
13 Cow showing extremes of foot and mouth that's destroyed with indecisive muttering (6)
14 Brenda's captivated by firm, erect and popular French scorer (8)
17 Kray-killing, apparently, is what put paid to Charles (8)
19 Testicles, er, cut out for flares, we hear (6)
22 Green, jumped-up sort demands a parliamentary enforcer for each paparazzo (14)
25 Volatile Clare Short's first – Labour leader having intervened – to get orders to return (7)
26 Getting off with someone generates interest in shaving (7)
27 Stupid sod Terry Venable's second sub seeker (9)
28/11 Tracey and other such exhibitionists strip for you in here (5,7,7)

DOWN

1 Country breathing apparatus misses onset of slaughter (4)
2 It's pointless going green, convulsing and getting an erection (9)
3 Pitiful respect shown by Brenda's staff (7)
4 Head from this female supposedly made men rock hard (6)
5 Retriever of party, Reverend Blair finally curbing agitation (8)
6 "Go in for cleavage, Posh – start to pad bust" (5,2)
7 Topless woman a tabloid tipped as the star of the evening (5)
8 Something of the cheap and nasty about Nazi leader confiscating 'Look Back in —' (10)
12 Like much of Asia, it means the earth in Sun circulation terms (5,5)
15 Cardinal rule I concocted about single cult hero (9)
16 A yardie's ground, quite likely (1,4,3)
18 Vaulted to get away from frenzied copulator (7)
20 Like breasts holding one fast (7)
21 One continually making critical remarks about penis on royal (6)
23 Popular bookkeepers, old people (5)
24 Enthusiastic attempt to get inside a girl's top (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 11.5.01. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

Solution to Crossword No. 181

Winner: EVE JACKSON

ACROSS: 1 Ropey 4 Apathetic 9 Occultism 10 Leper 11 Off ones trolley 13 Racks up 15 Also-ran 17 Oregano 19 Embargo 21 Feel-good factor 25 Ypres 26 Call it off 27 New Jersey 28 Essay.
DOWN: 1 Rood 2 Pacific 3 Yellow Sea 4 Alice 5 Arms trade 6 Hello 7 Tippler 8 Carrying on 12 Errol Flynn 14 Proboscis 16 Subscribe 18 Eyebrow 20 Riotous 22 Go see 23 Folly 24 Iffy.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Well, at least one thing we can all be grateful for – that the terrible crisis in our nation's countryside is at last completely dead and buried (unlike the cows that are piled up in the field next to the vicarage!).

So, well done everybody who helped the parish to come through what's been a very difficult time for us all, and who responded so well to my prayers that it might all somehow turn out for the best! As indeed it has, which means we can now go ahead with our PCC elections on June 7, exactly as I planned all along!

As it says in the Book of Maff, "Every cloud of smoke has a silver lining"!

But now that's all behind us, I've had time to go out and about nearer home, visiting those parts of the parish that really need a helping hand.

I am thinking in particular of the so-called "sink" estates, such as Herbert Morrison House and Chuter Ede Tower behind Pricerite.

Goodness me, it made me angry to see those beautiful blocks of flats ruined by the activities of mindless yobs.

And let's just look at that word, shall we, letter by letter? 'Y' is for 'young'. 'O' is for 'obnoxious'. 'B' is for 'badly behaved'. And 'S' is for 'sinners', a word we don't hear often enough these days.

And there's one more thing which is also highly relevant. The word 'yobs', as Cherie pointed out, is an anagram of the word 'boys'.

Which is particularly appropriate, since, let's face it, these troublemakers are nearly all male.

I can hear our friend from Tesco putting on his usual sneer and saying, "That's all very well, vicar, but what are you proposing should be done about this problem?"

Well, my answer is simple, in two words: "Crack down". 'Crack' from Greek 'krakos', meaning to do nothing. And 'down', from the Latin 'donum', meaning 'a free gift'.

Because, you know, that is surely the civilised and rational solution to the frustrations of our young people, as they roam the streets, spraying walls with their ugly daubs and throwing their beer cans into people's hedges.

Surely to goodness, it's not beyond us to bring these young people back to a more constructive lifestyle by offering some little rewards for giving up their anti-social behaviour and doing some voluntary work around the parish, such as helping to clear away all the beer cans out of people's hedges and painting over the graffiti. I suggest that we should offer these young people a CD token or a pair of trainers.

The thought of possessing one of these

coveted items would surely be enough to persuade even the most hardened young vandal or drug addict into becoming a responsible citizen? Particularly when you consider some of the titles which I hope Mr Branson might make available from the bargain bin of his record shop in the high street:

- *Wayne Sleep Sings Lloyd Webber*
- *Acker Bilk Plays The Movies*
- *Buck's Fizz Greatest Hits*

OK, youngsters, we've done our bit, it's over to you.

And maybe one day in the not too distant future, I'll be able to spell out a different version of the word 'yobs' – 'young, obedient, beautifully behaved, saved'!

Let's think about that, shall we, when we sing the new chorus I have written for this Sunday's Family Youth Service:

Tony's got a vision,
Tony's got a plan.
Let's clean up our city
And make it spick and span.
We're serving the community,
We're serving the community,
We're serving the community,
That's what we're doing!

Words and music by T. Blair
(with help from Mr Campbell!)

Tony

MY TRIP TO AMERICA

by Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club

Contrary to various rumours, I had a most productional visit to the United States. It is true that I did not meet the Rev. Bush, the leader of the Moron Church, but I had every opportunity to explain to our American friends how strongly we here in Britain feel about the terrible problem of pollution caused by people swanning around in gas-guzzling cars, eg, Jaguars which, I would remind you all, is an American company. I also spoke to a lot of high level people (some of them on the 42nd floor of some very tall buildings) and they all listened to me very politely. J.P.

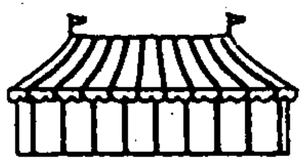
The Vicar greets Reverend Mandela of the Free Nelson Mandela Church of South Africa at the special open air service of Thanksgiving – a chance to meet one of the great religious figures of our time and also, of course, our guest Rev. Mandela.

A Special Message From Our Treasurer, Mr Brown

I have heard that there has been idle and malicious tittle-tattle round the parish to the effect that our church finances this year might turn out to be not quite so sound as I have said they would be. Let me make it absolutely clear that there is not a word of truth in these rumours. Thanks to my prudent stewardship, our bank balance is showing a satisfactory surprlus of £57 billion. I have personally counted these funds twice, and I can assure you that every penny of your money is accounted for and in safe hands. I cannot, of course, guarantee that this situation will be maintained indefinitely, as unfortunately I have to rely on the competence of certain of my colleagues, such as Mr Prescott, the Vicar and the other Mr Brown. G.B.

Prayer Of Thanks

We offer up a special prayer of gratitude this week for the courage of Cherie's sister Lauren in resisting the wiles of Satan in the form of Mr Hugh Hefner, who offered her all the riches of this world if she would only embarrass the vicar by taking her clothes off. Wise move, Lauren.



Millennium Tent Latest

It is very unfortunate that the parish is now having to pay £1 million a week out of our raffle fund to a security firm to guard what remains of the Millennium Tent, and to stop people treating it as a rubbish tip.

Also, the recent heavy rain has added to our problems by causing the tent to develop severe mildew. Furthermore, the RSPCA have told us that we could face prosecution if we evict the family of foxes which have taken up residence in the IT Zone. Altogether, we would be very grateful if some benefactor could now come forward to suggest a way of keeping this magnificent structure for future generations to enjoy. T.B.

Ladies!

With the PCC elections now only weeks away, we desperately need more ladies to come forward to lend a more 'caring' presence to our deliberations. It is quite indefensible that in the year 2001, only 35% of the places on the Council are filled by the fairer sex (if Mrs Jay will forgive the phrase!) I hope that some of our menfolk will have the decency to step down to make way for them (especially Mr Vaz!). T.B.

Notices

■ Mr Robin Cook is organising a special evening at the Star of Hinduja Restaurant in the High Street to celebrate the cultural diversity of St Albion's.

There will be a wide choice of menu, viz Chicken Tikka Masala or Chicken Masala Tikka (Calves Liver is off). £12.99 a head, so please book early!

A Present From The Vicar

Great news! Every baby in the parish will be given a lump sum of £500 by the Vicar. This is a truly innovative step for St Albion's and will eradicate child poverty overnight.

It works like this, writes Mr Brown:
We take £500 from you in the new compulsory collection on Sunday. We then give it to your baby by putting it in a longterm investment account in the name of G. Brown. By the time your baby is of age, we estimate this sum will be worth at least £300 in real terms, having been invested in such blue chip companies as Railtrack, Marks & Spencer and BT. G.B.

PARISH LAUGHS

Thanks to Tony Reeve, aged 8½ for this one. T.B.

A Twist In The Tale

by Jeffrey Archer

THE STORY SO FAR: Master storyteller Godfrey Bowman is facing trial on a trumped up charge of perjury.

Only days before he is due in the dock, a vital witness, Malrika Coughdrop, dies in a mysterious hit-and-run incident.

Now read on...

"May I ask you, Mr Bowman, where you were on the night of the 27th of April when this poor lady met her death?"

The 47-year-old Chief Inspector looked menacingly at the tanned, fit, handsome, physically active former brain surgeon turned novelist.

"That's easy, Inspector," he replied, quickly filling in his diary for the night in question. "Look, it says here that I was having dinner at the Caprice with a young slapper."

The Chief Inspector raised a quizzical eyebrow at the former astronaut and world heavyweight champion.

"And what would be the name of the slapper in question?"

"I think her name was Sally, now that you mention it," trilled Bowman's fragrant wife, Mandy, the world-famous nuclear scientist, who had unexpectedly entered the room following a photoshoot on the front lawn for members of the tabloid press.

"Thank you, ma'am," said the Chief Inspector, scribbling dutifully in his notebook. "But what makes you think I will believe any of this?"

Bowman silently handed over a brown envelope to the policeman. "Perhaps you should leave the country at this juncture?" he said pointedly, winking conspiratorially.

But then there was a twist in the tale. An amazing development in the story which no one had thought of.

Bowman was innocent. He had nothing to do with it at all. "I just don't believe it!" said everyone.

© J. Archer (based on a story by someone else and written by Richard Cohen)

CENSUS 2001 UPDATE

IF YOU have any problems filling in your census form, please ring the Eye Census Helpline at any time between 8.30am and 4.30pm (except at weekends) on 034621 217810. You will receive one of the following responses:

a) Number engaged

b) Number still engaged

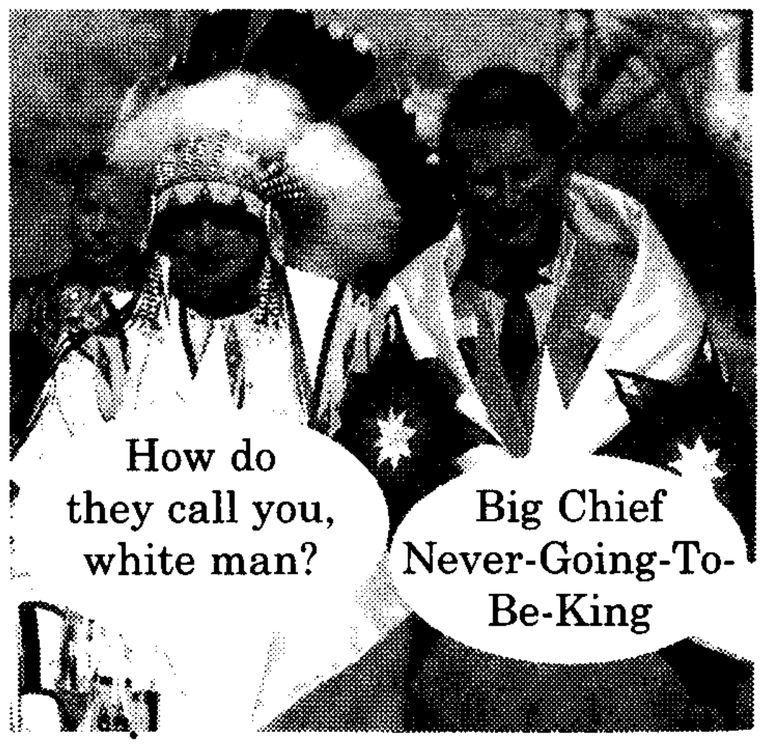
c) A computerised voice telling you *"You are being held in a queue. Your call is important to us."*

d) Handel's *Water Music*

e) A computerised voice telling you: *"If you wish to speak to a Call Centre in Aberdeen, press the star button twice and hold for further options."*

f) A recorded message telling you: *"This is the Private Eye Census Helpline. There is nobody here at present to answer your call, nor will there ever be. Why not throw your census form in the nearest bin, make yourself a nice cup of tea and go to bed?"*

CHARLES IN CANADA



TELEGRAPH SCOOPS

● McGuinness *was* member of IRA **1**

● Pope apparently a Catholic **2**

● Bear admits: "Yes, I shat in woods" **94**

ADVERTISEMENT
LABOUR IS NOT WASTING MONEY ON ADVERTISING
ADVERTISEMENT
WE HAVEN'T THROWN £63 MILLION OF YOUR MONEY AWAY
ADVERTISEMENT
HOW DARE THE TORIES ACCUSE US OF EXPENSIVE PROPAGANDA?
RGT

TEACHERS STRIKE FALTERS

by our **Education Staff**

THE TEACHERS strike, which began at 9.30 this morning, ran into trouble by 3.30 in the afternoon when teachers insisted on going home early.

Said one, "I am not going to strike for more than 35 hours a week and to expect any further commitment from me is totally unreasonable." He continued, "People have no idea of the pressures on striking teachers. They think we just turn up on the picket line and start not working but we have to spend a lot of free time preparing the strike, getting the materials together, writing placards, photocopying leaflets and going down the pub for a staff meeting."

He then continued, "And what's more we have to cram in all this striking before the summer holidays. I mean it is outrageous" *(cont. p. 94)*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fergie's former aide on murder rap 2

Di's former butler on teapot theft charge 3

Sophie's former partner in drugs row 4

Camilla's aunt's brother-in-law accused of damaging hotel trouser press 5

Someone who once met Princess Alexandra's daughter must pay parking fine 6

Country falls apart 94

THAT SHOCK CRE DECLARATION IN FULL

Declaration

I ..... *(fill in name)* hereby humbly confess that I am an appalling racist and bigot, who only wants to go round fomenting racial strife in order to attract votes to the Conservative Party. I believe Enoch was right, but I fully accept that during the election I will keep quiet about my far-right, extremist tendencies and pretend that I am just a normal, tolerant Guardian-reading human being, which I am not.

Signed .....

This document has been prepared by the Commission For Stirring Up Racial Trouble and signature is mandatory for all candidates.

Today – Only In Private Eye

THE TOP 100 MOST BORING LISTS IN BRITAIN

Compiled by Phil Supplement

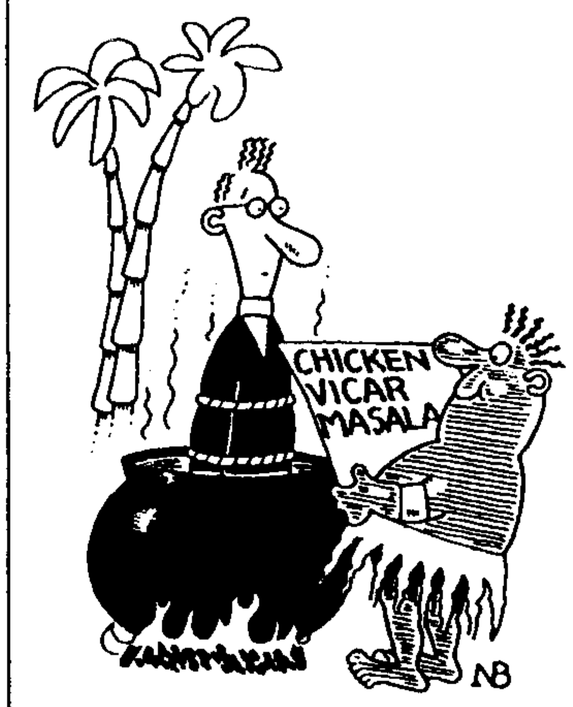
1 The *Sunday Times* Rich List *(Last year's position – 1)*

INCREDIBLY dull list of boring people with pictures of the Queen and Paul McCartney to try and persuade you that it isn't as boring as it looks.

2 The *Sunday Times* Young Rich List

NEWCOMER in the Boring Top Hundred, this list is not quite as dull as the full Rich List, but is considerably duller than the Rich Asian List, the Rich Dotcom List, the Young Rich Asian Dotcom List and *(That's enough boring lists. Ed.)*

Cartoonist Refuses To Sign CRE Pledge



PAIR OF WART iron gates, to fit opening 10 ft, with adjustable hindges, good condition, £40. —

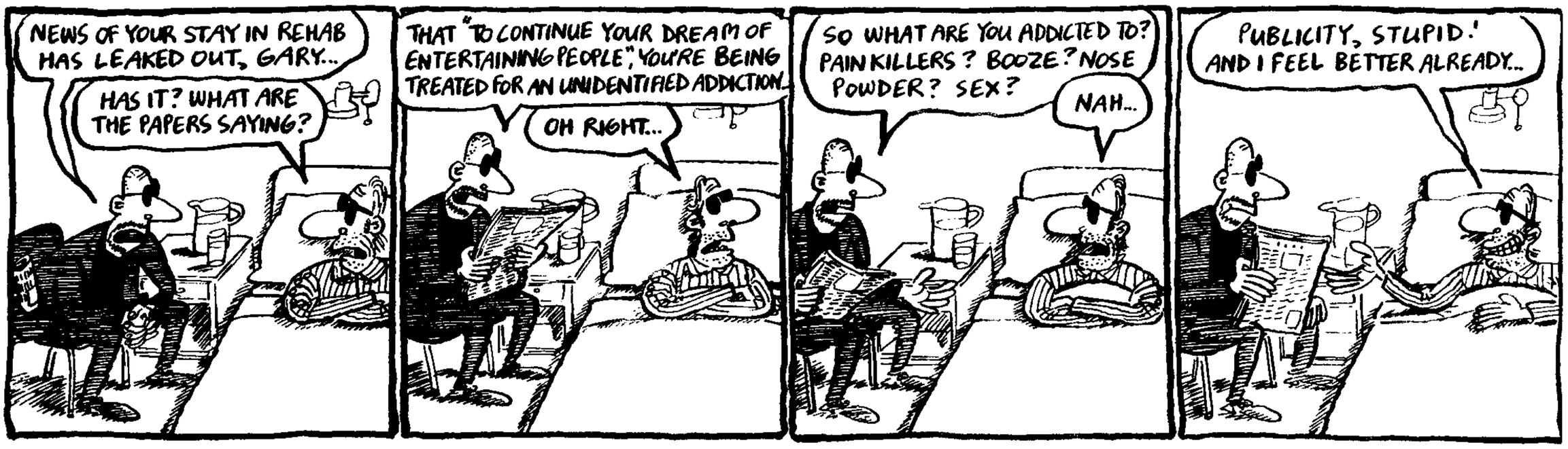
Yorkshire Evening Post

WIDOW 53. My husband was a Grenadier Guardsman. I would like to meet a Guardsman or Army for marriage. Photo & letter necessary.

Sunday Times

Celeb

LIGGER


NEWS OF YOUR STAY IN REHAB HAS LEAKED OUT, GARY...
HAS IT? WHAT ARE THE PAPERS SAYING?
THAT "TO CONTINUE YOUR DREAM OF ENTERTAINING PEOPLE", YOU'RE BEING TREATED FOR AN UNIDENTIFIED ADDICTION.
OH RIGHT...
SO WHAT ARE YOU ADDICTED TO? PAIN KILLERS? BOOZE? NOSE POWDER? SEX?
NAH...
PUBLICITY, STUPID! AND I FEEL BETTER ALREADY...

TOP TORY TOLD TO SHUT UP OR BE FIRED

by Our Political Staff **Ray Cist**

A SENIOR member of the Tory Party has been told to keep his mouth shut in case he is responsible for the party losing the next election.

Mr William Hague has been taken to one side by the party's grandees *(Who they? Ed.)* and warned that his outspoken views on anything at all are liable to damage the party.

TOWNEND IS NIGH

Tory officials have tried to play down the Hague affair, pointing out that he is an insignificant figure who is virtually unknown in the country and who will be retiring after the election in any case.

LATE NEWS

Middle-East Peace Talks Interrupt War Full Story p. 94

ARMY TO RECRUIT MEN SHOCK

by Phil Bra

THE BRITISH Army has announced a drive to try and increase its quota of male soldiers.

"Up to now," said a spokesman, "we have concentrated on recruiting transsexuals and women with small breasts.

"We now feel that the time is right to bring in men to serve in the army, despite the obvious objections to their presence in a modern fighting force."

But General Cynthia Surgical-Procedure, 56, 24, 32, was unconvinced. "Men have many traditional qualities," she said, "like an ability to cook, sew or be a vicar, but they would be out of place in the front line."

Those Regiments In Full

The Royal Army Transgender Corps
The Queen's Own Queens
The Blackwatch Undies
The Coldcream Guards
The Royal Corps of Confusing Signals
(That's enough regiments. Ed.)

What You Will Hear on BBC's Radio 4

(Chairman Sir Pigling Bland)

Brian Perkins *(for it is he)*: You have reached the BBC but the 8 O'clock News you wish to hear is not available.

If you wish to listen to Radio 3's composer of the week – Vivaldi's Four Seasons – press 3. If you wish to hear Terry Wogan playing Vivaldi's Four Seasons, press 2. If you wish to hear how much money Johnny Vaughan is being paid, press 5 followed by six noughts. If you wish to listen to the Today programme, please hold. The time sponsored by Accurist is 8.05.

John Humphrys: Thank you for holding. You've now reached the Today programme with John Humphrys and on the line I have the chairman of BT, Sir Pigling Bland.

Humphrys: Good morning, Sir Pigling.

Pigling: Good morning, John.

Humphrys: Could you speak up a bit, Sir Pigling, this line isn't very good.

Pigling: How dare you criticise me in my new job. You're fired.

Jim Naughtie *(for it is he)*: Sir Pigling, these new figures that BT is in debt to the tune of £30bn must be very... reassuring for you. What are your plans for the future of BT, Sir Pigling?

Pigling: Well, Jim, I intend to increase charges, hire a lot of consultants and sack most of the staff.

Naughtie: Bold stuff, Sir Pigling. And anything else?

Pigling: Well, obviously, Jim, I'm going to hire Johnny Vaughan to be the voice of the speaking clock so that we can win over more young listeners to dial up our time service.

Naughtie: This is tremendously exciting news, Sir Pigling. Of course, your critics might say that you are doing almost *too* well in your new job.

Pigling: Are you criticising me? You're fired.

Perkins: And now Thought For The Day with the new BT Chairman, His Holiness The Dalai Bland.

Bland: You know, a lot of people say to me, "Sir Pigling, I don't believe in BT any more, it's like the BBC, it just doesn't work in the modern world, but I always say to them, 'How dare you! You're fired!'"

(Cont. 94khz)

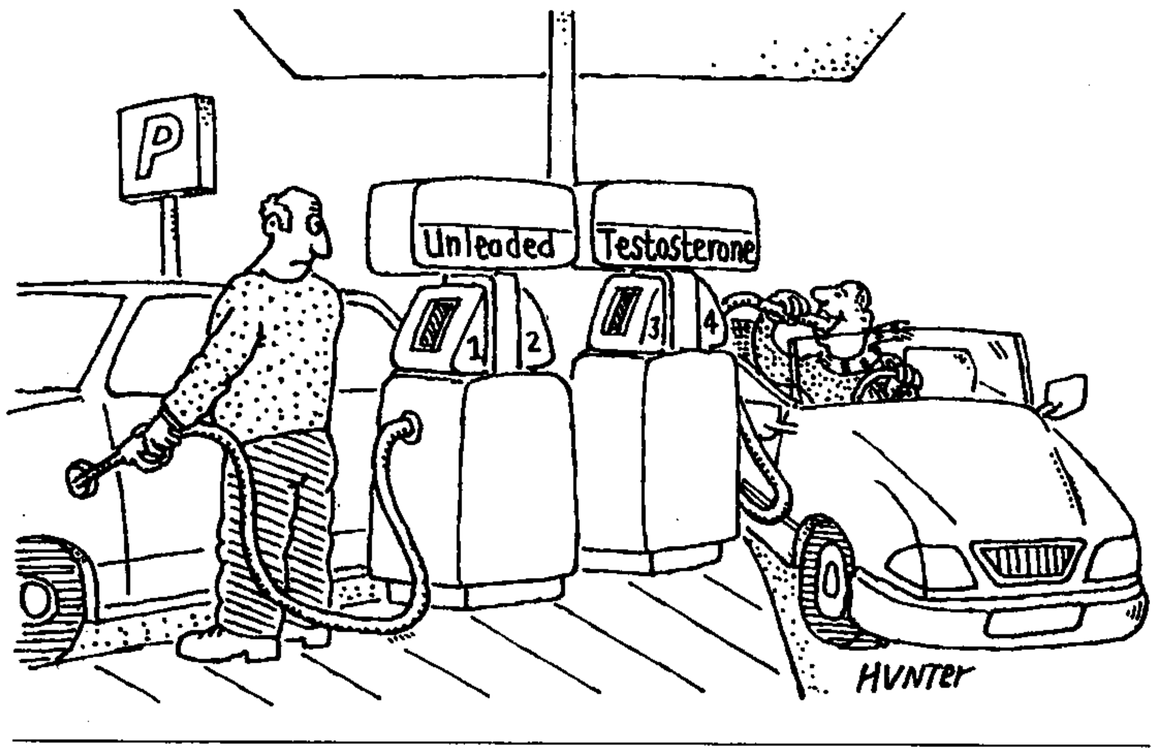
Gardener's Tips

No. 94

If you want your garden digging up for Spring, **writes Old Bore**, but can't do it yourself, simply ring up the police with "a new clue to the Lamplugh Mystery" and before you can say "waste of police time" hundreds of uniformed men will be turning over your garden.

© *Old Bore.*

'That's baroque stars for you!"



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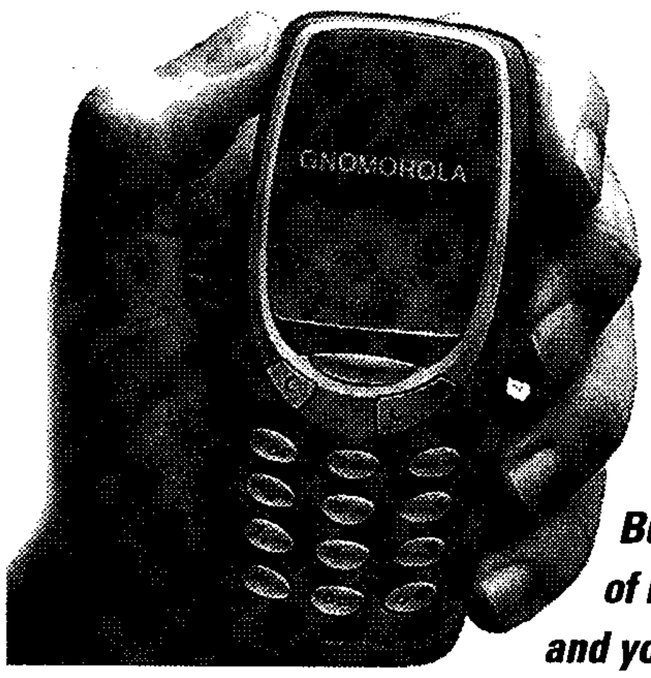


AMAZING OFFER FROM GNOMOROLA

Buy any of our amazing range of mobile phones for only 10p and you can choose your favourite ring tone from any of the following:

Goodbyeee
Buddy, Can You Spare 16.5 Million Dimes?
Nice Work If You Can Get It (But Not Here)
You'll Never Work Again
You Take The High Jump
La Phona e Mobile
Piano Concerto No.3 by Edmund Rubbra (Surely shome mishtake?)

Including

- ***Free connection to Lemon, Yodaphone, Nookia, Cellmate***
- ***100,000 minutes of no-charge Talktime***

Plus

Free Novelty Covers including: Bob The Builder, Lord Archer, Foot-And-Mouth, Naughty Ned Sherrin, Bungee Jump, Spectator Wine Column

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Throughout Britain this week mobile phone numbers have been changed. Gnomorola has changed the number of people working for them from 4000 to 0 and has added the prefix P45 to all their former employees. We apologise for any confusion this may cause.

NEWS ROUND-UP

Disposal of Pounds Criticised

THERE have been growing complaints about the economic impact of the Government decision to transport over a million healthy pounds every month, and dumping them into an enormous money pit in Greenwich.

"It's vital we dispose of the pounds in this way," said a Government spokesman, "because all the advice we're getting tells us this will provide a smokescreen and prevent the spread of articles about our inability to sell the Dome."

Despite Government assurances that this enormous money-pit won't cause any long-lasting suffering, many people living near the Dome have complained of feeling sick to the stomach, watching endless amounts of public money going up in smoke.

More Police Shock

THE Government today welcomed a 77% increase in the numbers of policemen on BBC television.

"Under the Conservatives we just had to make do with 'Dalziel and Pascoe' and 'Between the Lines'," said a clearly delighted Jack Straw, "but as a direct result of New Labour's initiatives, the number of fictional policemen on television has rocketed, with endless troubled detectives pounding the schedules.

"These extra policemen on the screen mean that people throughout Britain feel safe to stay in their homes at night."

Capitalism Demo

THE Government today urged the public to be on their guard against vicious mobs of capitalists that have been specially trained in America to wreak havoc.

At a given signal of economic slowdown these capitalists give a demonstration of their flagrant disregard for the pleas of Governments everywhere.

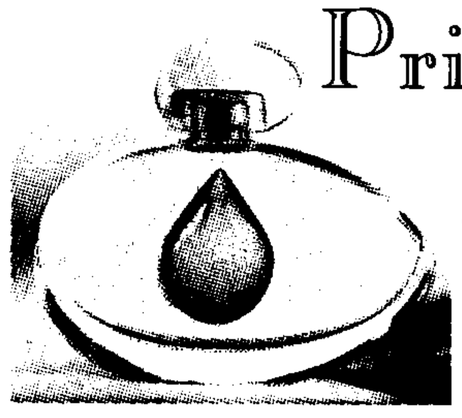
"They wish to 'smash the state' of British industry and they lash out at the first sign of a profits warning," said one concerned Anarchist. "Make no mistake – these hardcore capitalists are highly organised and behave as if they're a law unto themselves."

Reuters

ADVERTISEMENT

New From London Underground

Eau de Partial Privatizassion



A FRAGRANT mix of stale policies that is going to get up everyone's nose. Top smelly stuff from Britain's great stink-makers.

To be released on tube platforms soon!!!

YOBS
HUSBAND
Where shall we go on our hols this year?
Dunno
Somewhere warm.. with entertainment an' plenty of booze
Sorted.. Two weeks at home in front of the fire, with a barrel of beer ..... watchin' the telly

LARKIN LESBIAN POEM FOUND

They fuck you up, your mum
and her live-in friend
who used to be a games
mistress.

P. Larkin, (Hull) 1963

"I know you are new to the job but this is the second time you have answered a call straight away"

IT'S OFFICIAL – CHRIS AND BILLIE TO GET 'PUBLICITY'

by Our Wedding Staff **Matthew Fraud**

THE teenager singer Billie Piper and the millionaire DJ Chris Evans have formally announced that they will be getting publicised as soon as possible.

In a romantic ceremony, attended by hundreds of their closest photographers, the couple pledged that they would "love each other to be in the papers in sickness and in health until everyone is bored to death of us."

Said Evans, "I knew Billie was the one – the one to get me onto the front page of the tabloids."

He continued, "This time it's for Evans – I mean, for ever. I am so in love with myself, words can't describe it. I'm the luckiest man in the world. Billie loves me and so do I."

Asked about their plans for the future, the couple said, "For the time being we are happy with stories about our wedding and honeymoon, but in the future we would love to have stories about us having children or, if not, maybe just getting divorced and going off with some other celebrities."

Join the London Philharmonic Choir, constantly hailed by the critics as one of the country's foremost independent amateur choruses. We perform principally with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, along with many other internationally renowned Orchestras, Conductors and Socialists in the major concert halls both in the UK and abroad.

Advertisement, Evening Standard

To date he has performed in one hundred and thirteen different countries. In an average year he cocks up forty to fifty overseas concerts.

Borneo Bulletin

'PATHETIC LITTLE CREATURE' TO BE SPARED

by Our Political Staff **Simon Helffer**

AFTER BEING buried alive under the foot and mouth epidemic for two months, farmers were amazed to find that little Tony the Prime Minister was still alive.

CALF-BAKED

"It's a miracle," said one. "You would have thought he would be dead and buried by now, but, amazingly, he is still alive."

There were still fears last week that he would have to be put down anyway, but instead the public have adopted him and taken him to their hearts.

MOO LABOUR

"Tony is so lovable and cute and sweet," said one eight-year-old fan (Alastair Campbell). "He is perfectly healthy and it would be a tragedy if he were to be killed off just because he has been linked to a national disaster."

Phoenix is £4.99 per pound.

Vanishing Britain

With Magnus Drinklater

No. 94 Silence In The Glen

AS THE highland mist lies over the purple heather on the banks of Loch Nokia, the only sound is the plaintive wail of a lone piper, clad in his traditional garb of kilt and trainers.

He is playing an ancient lament to mark the ending of one of the oldest crafts in Scotland's proud history.

For hundreds of years, the guid folk of Bathgate have toiled in their crofts to produce the familiar single malt mobile phone, known the world over for its subtle blend of American technology and sheep droppings, distilled to a formula which has been handed down from father to son for well over two years.

"Aye, och, ye will nae see the like o' it again," mourned veteran assembler Jock McSimcard, as he looked sadly at the last NX747 which will ever come off the legendary Bathgate production line.

"'Tis a sad day, the noo," he wept, "tae see the end of the craft community of auld Motorola. Still, nae matter. The wee phones are nae fockin' use tae man nair beast. I'm awa' doon the chippie for ma tea."

ROY of the FUGGERS
FUGHAM.F.C. ARE DIVISION ONE CHAMPIONS!
WE REPRESENT THE BEST IN ENGLISH FOOTBALL
YES, OUR TOP SCORER, MANAGER AND CHAIRMAN ARE ALL FOREIGN
FUGGIT!
ROGER.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Kelpie, the Royal Corgi

So. Farewell then
Kelpie.
You were 17
In human years.

This makes you
119,
Which is even older than
The Queen Mother.

E.J. Thribb (2½, in dog years)

Is this Renée Zellweger article too thin?

Asks Phil Space

IT'S the question that the whole nation is asking. Up and down the country people in pubs and clubs are only talking about one issue – is all this stuff

about Renée Zellweger too thin to bother reading?

Just a few weeks ago Renée Zellweger was filling out newspapers nicely with an average size of twelve pages devoted to her English accent, big pants, boyfriend Jim Carrey and struggles to put on weight.

But now Renée Zellweger pieces are a shadow of their former selves, struggling to pad out a single column and looking decidedly flimsy.

"There's no meat on this piece at all," said one Renée Zellweger watcher "you can't flesh it out and the bare bones are plain to see.

"I don't fancy reading about her at all any more."

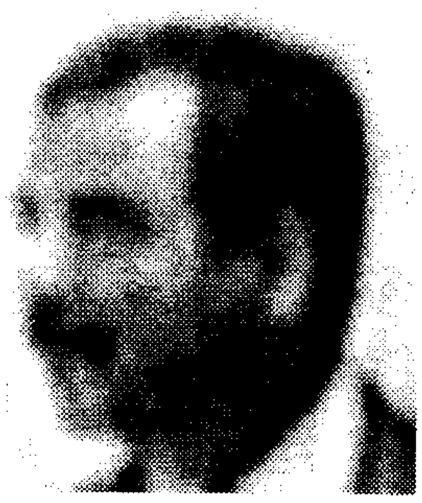
ON OTHER PAGES

● Is the Daily Mail too fatuous? . . . . . p. 94

"Yo, bitch... what's 'app'nin'?"

Metropolitan Police Notice

WANTED



Have you seen this man? He is believed to have been involved in a number of war crime incidents between the years 1990 and 1991 in the Baghdad area of Iraq. The police are very anxious to interview this gentleman, who may now be using the name 'Saddam Hussein' or 'Adolf Hitler'.

If you see this man, do not attempt to have a go, as he may be armed with weapons of mass-destruction, such as nuclear missiles, anthrax, nerve gas, etc, sufficient to destroy the entire human race. Members of the public are advised to leave the arrest of the wanted man to the Metropolitan Police, who already have a team of three highly-trained officers to deal with this situation in a pro-active manner – ie, flying off to Baghdad to apprehend the miscreant in his nuclear bunker with the words "Come along, Mr Hussein, sir, the game is up."

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

ANITA RODDICK

When you think of spoons, do you think of them individually or as a set?

Oh, the individual every time! That's my whole philosophy.

So you'll be very careful about how you look after your spoons?

Of course! I treat them with the respect that they deserve!

Is there any type of spoon you wouldn't buy?

Well, I certainly wouldn't buy any that had been tested on animals. But they wouldn't do that, would they?

Would you ever buy a set of second-hand spoons?

Yes, why shouldn't you? I think re-cycling is very important, don't you.

In your travels, you must come across all sorts of unusual spoons?

Oh yes indeed. But of course there are some tribes in South America who've never seen a spoon, or any other type of cutlery for that matter.

Do you ever throw spoons away?

Only as a last resort, and I feel the spoon is suffering.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with your spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Rowan Pelling, Editor of the Erotic Review.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

As your agent, Sophie, I'm a bit concerned about the balance between your 'Bad Girl' image and your work.
Ah-but I've done three new pieces this week!
Exactly-we don't want to flood the market. Perhaps you should drink more?

Every football pitch in England will be inspected as part of a survey aiming to improve the grass roots level of the game.

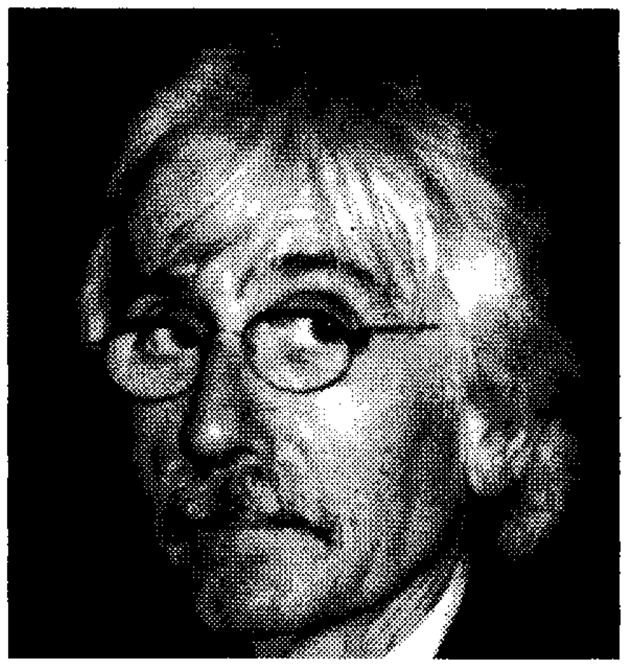
Express & Star

9.00 Victorians Uncovered. A documentary exploring inter-racial relationships in the 18th century. (T) (5715)

Daily Telegraph

TESCO FLAT PACK SOFT TOILET TISS WHITE 88 SHTS

DIARY



SIR ROY STRONG:
A Very Personal Birthday Tribute To My Dearest Ma'am

Seventy-five years young! Hurrah for Her Gracious Majesty! 75 years young – yet still she gets out of bed each day, brushes her own teeth and walks around the Palace under her own steam, eschewing the sedan chair and refusing all offers of a fireman's lift from the Lord Chamberlain.

No one who has had the slightest contact with the Queen could come away without a profound feeling of respect. When I last encountered her, at a private gathering earlier this *année*, I spoke frankly to her. "If I may speak as a Constitutional Expert, Ma'am, to me you are the first blossom of Spring, the very dew on the mountain rose," I said.

Quick as a flash, she replied, "Have you been waiting long? Where have you come from? Do you enjoy your job? And what exactly does that entail?" Not for the first time, I was taken aback by the depth of her curiosity, not to mention her very real affection for those of us involved in the arts, and in particular me.

The first time we met was nigh-on forty years ago, when we were both destined for great things. Yet I remember the occasion as though it were yesterday. Across a crowded room, we were drawn to one another like ducks to water. I was wearing a silk *blouson* in the deepest shade of Lincoln green, with extravagantly ruffled sleeveons and the merest hint of bell-bottom to my emerald *trouses*, with buckled shoes, tastefully but extravagantly heeled. I forget what she was wearing, poor dear – clothes are hardly her strong point! – but it would have been something in character: dull dress, handbag, sensible shoes, nothing over-imaginative. Her Majesty always dresses herself in keeping with the occasion. Not for her the plunging neckline at the Cenotaph, the micro-skirt for Maundy Thursday or the backless strappy-top and platform shoes for the Trooping of the Colour. Would we really be better off with Martine McCutcheon as our President, as Republicans suggest? One blanches at the very idea.

As I looked at her across that busy *chambre*, I sensed that she was admiring my moustaches, perhaps with a touch of envy in her heart, for she is, after all, only human. But they would never have suited her, and she must deep in her heart have realised it. For she has never once mentioned my moustaches to me, either then or later.

She is, at heart, an outdoors person, a countrywoman to the rounded toes of her grubby Wellingtons. She has told me so herself. She once took one look at me and confided, "I really must go outside."

Ma'am is never happier than when feeding her beloved corgies, a remarkable act of generosity which, with a combination of extraordinary grace and down-to-earth country skill, she insists upon performing herself at least once a month. I will, I think, never forget an encounter we once had in the Mall, she resplendent on horse, myself on most humble foot.

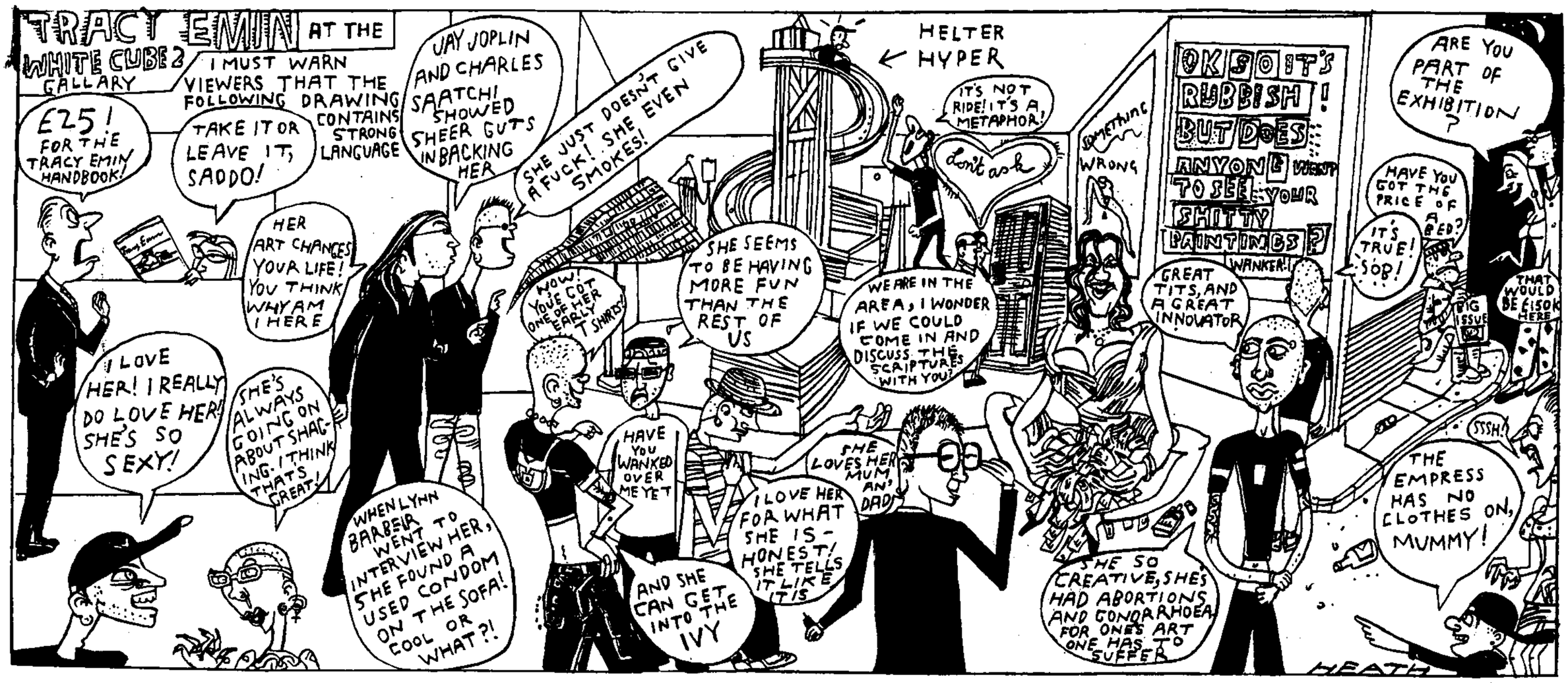
I was there with a new pair of binoculars, purchased from a specialist store in St James's. All at once, I caught sight of Her Majesty riding towards me, every inch the countrywoman, never more comfortable astride a saddle than when riding on a horse. Sinking to my knee, her most loyal subject, I roared and cheered as I waved my silken 'kerchief aloft. As luck would have it, at that very moment the steed of an accompanying Horseguard raised its tail as though in salute and emitted a steaming heap of *le manure du cheval royal* athwart my flowing locks.

Just imagine my sense of honour at being singled out as the recipient of this priceless gift! On my return home, I commissioned a leading society *portraitiste* to paint me in oils, the ordure of the garter still resplendent upon my head. The finished masterpiece now takes pride of place above the mantel in our withdrawing room, a warm memento of an historic encounter.

She will go down *en histoire* as one of the most remarkable little women in the history of this island. For half a century, she has offered every Prime Minister the benefit of her great experience. They readily testify to the extraordinary breadth of her knowledge. She never misses a thing. "Aren't you the one that usually wears glasses?" she once remarked to John Major. Only seconds before, he had taken his specs off for a quick polish. Her eye for detail is second-to-none, and so too is her dedication. Happy Birthday, Ma'am! God Save The Queens!

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW


TRACT EMIN AT THE WHITE CUBE 2 GALLARY
£25! FOR THE TRACY EMIN HANDBOOK!
I MUST WARN VIEWERS THAT THE FOLLOWING DRAWING CONTAINS STRONG LANGUAGE
TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT, SADDO!
HER ART CHANGES YOUR LIFE! YOU THINK WHY AM I HERE
I LOVE HER! I REALLY DO LOVE HER! SHE'S SO SEXY!
SHE'S ALWAYS GOING ON ABOUT SHAGGING. I THINK THAT'S GREAT!
WHEN LYNN BARBER WENT TO INTERVIEW HER, SHE FOUND A USED CONDOM ON THE SOFA! COOL OR WHAT?!
JAY JOPLIN AND CHARLES SAATCHI SHOWED SHEER GUTS IN BACKING HER
SHE JUST DOESN'T GIVE A FUCK! SHE EVEN SMOKES!
WOW! YOU'VE GOT ONE OF HER EARLY T SHIRTS!
SHE SEEMS TO BE HAVING MORE FUN THAN THE REST OF US
HAVE YOU WANKED OVER ME YET
AND SHE CAN GET INTO THE IVY
HELTER HYPER
IT'S NOT RIDE! IT'S A METAPHOR!
Don't ask
I LOVE HER FOR WHAT SHE IS - HONEST! SHE TELLS IT LIKE IT IS
SHE LOVES HER MUM AN' DAD
WE ARE IN THE AREA, I WONDER IF WE COULD COME IN AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURES WITH YOU?
SOMETHING WRONG
OK SO IT'S RUBBISH! BUT DOES ANYONE WANT TO SEE YOUR SHITTY PAINTINGS? WANKER!
GREAT TITS, AND A GREAT INNOVATOR
SHE SO CREATIVE, SHE'S HAD ABORTIONS AND GONORRHOEA FOR ONES ART ONE HAS TO SUFFER
ARE YOU PART OF THE EXHIBITION?
HAVE YOU GOT THE PRICE OF A BED?
IT'S TRUE! SOB!
THAT WOULD BE £150K HERE
BIG ISSUE
SSSH!
THE EMPRESS HAS NO CLOTHES ON, MUMMY!
HEATH

Literary Review

Demon Barbour

On Green Dolphin Street
Sebastian Faulks
(Hutchinson, £16.99)

FIRST things first. *On Green Dolphin Street* is a perfect example of that distinctive English literary phenomenon, the upper-middle-brow bestseller. (No disrespect is intended by this tag — like Mr Faulks, in his accounts of the kind of food available in a Washington restaurant circa 1960, one wants only to be accurate.) If it doesn't sell 20,000 copies in hardback, someone at Random House will get fired.

Already its author — looking more than ever like an advertisement for Loden coats or Barbour jackets — is staring quizzically from the pages of the Sunday supplements. By the end of the year every reading group in the country will be exchanging copies as Christmas presents.

How does he do it? Set mostly in Kennedy-era Washington, *On Green Dolphin Street* is neither about France nor, at least directly, about warfare, which may disappoint the fans but it does manage to pull off the same procedural tricks as the previous bestsellers. Lavish recreations of a long-vanished past; illicit loves; divided loyalties — they're all here.

Mary van der Linden, the female lead — and note how Faulks' novels are targeted at that section of the populace that actually buys books, ie women — is an expatriate English dame whose husband is attached to the British embassy. As Charlie cracks up — the vodka bottle in the desk drawer; the 2.40pm hotel breakfast call — she begins an affair with whey-faced Frank Renzo, a sharp-eyed journalist whose career was blighted by the McCarthyite pogroms.

Thus framed, the novel settles down comfortably into, well, an endless series of descriptions. Buildings. Rooms. Emotions. Dinner tables. This, it turns out, is what Faulks' wryly sedulous eye does best. A cosy lunch with Frank? "Mary had the broiled snapper, Frank had the chops with gravy and mashed potatoes. At her request he ordered her some wine to go with her fish, after which she had a slice of key lime pie and..." Today's dress choice? "She was wearing a beige cashmere sweater and a navy woollen skirt; her dark hair was pushed back from her face by..." Another restaurant visit? "The table was in a booth with bench seats, one half of a dozen such on a raised platform; the napkins were white and starched, but the mahogany surface was bare. She lit a cigarette..." Faulks has slipped up here. I mean, what *kind* of cigarette? No, seriously.

The point about these descriptions is their superfluity, their non-relation to anything to do with the plot. Elsewhere, there are some self-conscious bits of wisdom ("Mary had thought all children were as richly enfolded in love as she was because the child assumes the extent to which it possesses any quality is the norm, until its experience of others' lives gives it a median against which to judge") and one or two flourishes (a row of Cadillac fins glinting like, um, "a rumour of sharks") to remind us of the serious literary credentials on display. Curiously enough, the best parts of *On Green Dolphin Street* — and these are very good indeed — are a world away from the Washington charivari, taking in Frank's time as a Pacific GI and his early career as a journalist covering a racist murder trial in the South and the retreat from Dien Bien Phu. Here, all of a sudden, the writing turns sharp, distinct and allusive. It's when Faulks starts hinting at things rather than endlessly describing them that he really starts to hum. But that's the upper-middle-brow bestseller for you. I'm enrolling at the reading group right this minute.

Stuck for ideas

Glue
Irvine Welsh
(Jonathan Cape, £12.00)

SO you've made your big splash, you've upset the *Daily Mail* and endless mugs bid for your film rights. What next for the literary *enfant terrible*?

The time-honoured formula is to knock out a few short stories to top-up petty cash, maybe a sub-standard novel or two to keep your publishers off your back; and then, realising suddenly that though you may be *terrible* you're no longer an *enfant*, you are required to deliver: it's time for the epic. Which in the present climate means a bout of rhetorical incontinence lasting 400-plus pages, spread across a number of continents and cultures, following several characters over several years (cf Tolstoy, Zadie Smith, Wilbur Smith).

"Hey, the kids are away. Let's fight"

Now it's Irvine Welsh's turn. *Glue* is completely unexpected only in as much as we were rather hoping he'd stick to his DJing. In every other way it ploughs familiar furrows of degradation and grog – like in *Trainspotting*, it's the story of a group of Edinburgh lowlifes living low lives (but this time across decades, continents). Like in *Trainspotting*, they're the closest of mates, mates in the peculiarly Scottish sense that they'll happily glass whichever one of them blinks out of turn.

There's enough skag, ecstasy, lager, vomit, excrement and violence to keep Welsh's countless devotees enthralled. All that's new is that this time Welsh is looking at the big questions. So: why do the boys — Carl (DJ), Billy (boxer), Terry (one for the ladies) and Gally (waster-cum-tragic hero) — turn out like they do? Because of how they were brought up, stupid! How do they come to terms with their miserable existences? They don't — they are e-mo-shun-ally scarred, see. And what are we to take from this *Bildungsroman*, these lost souls thrashing about in locked cages? Well, we shouldn't judge — after all, one of them dies of Aids, and underneath it all they're just human, like you and I.

Glue is, for the most part, written in Welsh's trademark Edinburgh demotic, sample: "ah am n aw, ah wis oan ma wey hame". This is a neat trick. As long as you can sweat through the first 50 pages or so, you start to get the gist of what the characters might be saying. Like management-speak, once meaning has been painfully wrung from the prose, you feel kinda part of it, one of the lads, and this encourages a silent complicity with events and explications.

Nonetheless, after five novels Welsh's take on Edinburgh street-speak is beginning to grate. He can transcribe but he can't create, lacking the ear to pluck poetry from the everyday that makes, for example, James Kelman's Glesgay patois so compelling. And you begin to feel that the constant swearing suggests less the true language of inarticulate washouts, than an author short on idioms — roughly 1 in 20 words is a "cunt" or a "fuck", which, in a novel of some 200,000 words, means around 30 pages are filled entirely with profanities. To be fair to Irvine, he must be pushed for time: you can't be mooching around dreaming up nice sentences when you've got parties to go to with Damien Hirst.

Anthony Powell's Heaven Journal

21 April 2001
Somewhat surprised — as one receives few invitations these days — to be sent letter requesting attendance at Eton conference. Subject for discussion apparently oneself. Tho' long past the age at which one could be expected to derive any satisfaction from such gatherings, decided that it might be thought bad form to decline

22 April 2001
Pre-conference luncheon at Ritz. Great crowd of persons, many of them quite unknown to me. Food — pâté de fois gras, smoked salmon, entrecôte etc — eatable without being notably exciting. Later caught a few moments of post-luncheon address on "The Genius of Anthony Powell". This I was interested to hear, if conscious that certain aspects of an admittedly large subject had not been adequately dealt with. But I would hesitate to pronounce a judgement.

23 April 2001
To Eton. Here a somewhat seedy crowd had assembled: fans, academics, sprinkling of literary types, etc. Nevertheless, one felt their objectives deserving of encouragement. Glance at conference "programme" — "Widmerpool — our greatest comic character", "The Achievement of Anthony Powell" and so forth, certainly subjects not without all intrinsic interest, confirmed this impression. Lunch taken in dining hall — chicken, rice, peas. To drink: tap water 2001 (I did not see the label).

24 April 2001
Various characters met on previous day (Massingberd, A.N. Wilson, etc) given space in newspapers to reflect on proceedings at length.
(cont. p. 94)

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO WRITE?
COME ON! COME ON!
JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION!
NO, YOU'VE RUN OUT OF TIME!
WELL, IF...
...ER... COULD YOU...
...PUT 'TO...
JOHN HUMPHRYS BOOK SIGNING
THE GREAT FOOD GAMBLE
THE GREAT FOOD GAMBLE

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ THE revelation that Alec Guinness had avoided prosecution for cottaging way back when by giving a false name — that of the Dickens character Herbert Pocket — to the police was the juiciest titbit in the recent Sunset Times serialisation of Sheridan Morley's new biography of dear, dear Johnny Gielgud.

However, the garrulous Sherry nearly blew the gaff on the whole thing about three months ago when his publisher, Hodder & Stoughton, threw a drinks party for the old boy at the Garrick. Sherry took great delight in recounting the Guinness tale to anyone who would listen, until news of his indiscretion got back to Hodder md Martin Neild and his editor Roland Philipps, who hustled him to one side and ever so politely gagged him.

Mercifully for Hodder's lucrative deal, no one present blabbed about the morsel Morley had broadcast.

■ IF ONLY Metro had been as punctilious in its financial dealings as it has been in matters editorial.

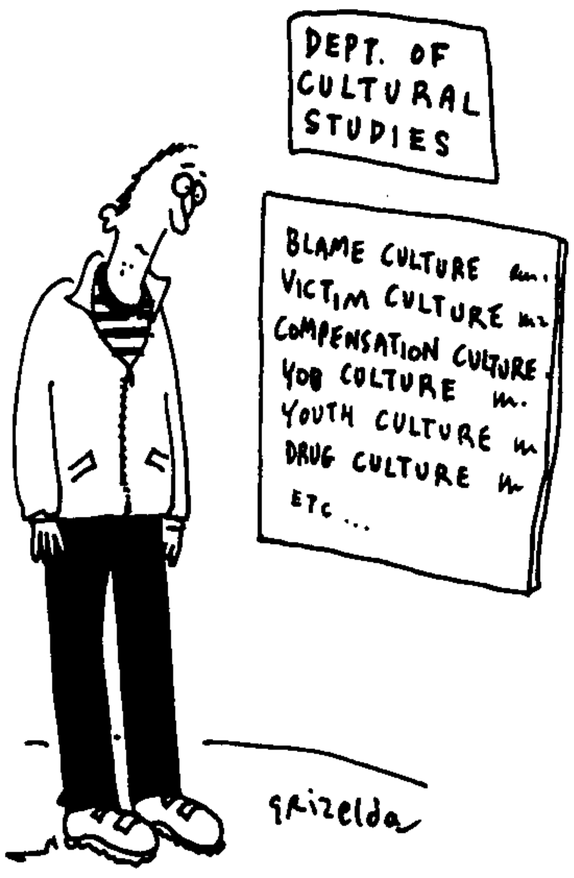
In her book Class Act (see Eyes passim), Lynda Lee-Potter quotes from the works of Anthony Powell among others to support her arguments about class. The author was understood to have been horrified when she received a copy of the corrected manuscript to discover that as well as making the expected corrections to her own copy, her allotted editor had also amended and rewritten some of the quotations — Powell included — hacking away so merrily that the end result bore little relation to the original text.

The true versions of the butchered quotes were only reinstated when Glenda kicked up a stink.

■ NEWS that Foyles has settled out of court with the last of the former staff members accused of defrauding the shop brings to mind a quite splendid article that appeared in the Bookseller 15 years ago. In it, then manager Velimir Stimac — one of the main defendants in the fraud case — was presented as a model of probity. "Mr Stimac is tough, hard-working Yugoslavian and street-wise," it says, adding that "his word is law... he has often wrestled with shoplifters in the street and is still Foyles' greatest deterrent against theft, which costs the company many thousands of pounds each year."

Rich stuff, indeed, considering this amount is piffling compared to the £10m that Stimac and his cohorts are thought to have bilked from the shop between 1982 and 1999. In particular, Stimac's own business, the now-closed Eton Bridge Bookshop in Windsor, is thought to have done very well in terms of stock ordered by, but diverted from, Foyles.

'Bookworm'



Hannibal Lecteur

PUBLISHERS like to give their favoured books a push into the bookshops with a few friendly pre-publication quotes from big-name authors — usually those who are on their list and know what's good for them. When that tactic has seemed a bit overplayed, the quotes have come from booksellers; but that never really worked because nobody cares enough what a bookseller thinks.

Now HarperCollins has found an exciting new way to play the early puff game. Its ads for One For My Baby, Tony Parsons' follow-up to Man and Boy, lead with a rave preview. Parsons' first novel "has sold almost a million copies", the reviewer notes, but the new one is "the stronger book, the smarter book, the child who grows up to be President."

Who is this number one fan? Well actually it's Tony Parsons himself — now the unchallenged heir to Jeffrey Archer as the book world's most unembarrassable self-promoter.

Among the real reviewers, Sebastian Faulks has been causing critics a few problems with his new novel On Green Dolphin Street (see accompanying review). Was it romantic gush, and therefore good for a jokily patronising approach; or literature, in which case a more reverent approach was needed? No one seemed quite sure.

Anita Brookner summed up the prevailing mood with one of the glacial, devastating semi-compliments in which she specialises. Faulks "is not a refined stylist" she allowed in her Spectator review, but his novel "will be received with simple pleasure, for it possesses a forthrightness and also an enthusiasm for which many readers will be grateful."

Others seemed to be trying hard, and with limited success, not to condescend. The Sunday Telegraph's David Robson used the phrase "a real page-turner" which tends to be something of a put-down on the smarter book pages. According to Christopher Hope in the Independent, here was "the book of the movie they don't make any more: a thoroughly old-fashioned, all-American, platinum-plated weepie."

The sound of faint praise echoed elsewhere. "On Green Dolphin Street rises several steps above the cheap romance novel," Jay Parini conceded in the Guardian. "Rather as you do with a decent television serial, I turned happily enough to the book every night for several days." In the Daily Telegraph, Melissa Danes found that "as a mood piece, the novel works."

But one critic at least was having none of this reverential pussy-footing about. "This novel should not be mistaken for an ambitious literary work just because of the penumbra which surrounds Faulks's name," pronounced Robert MacFarlane in the TLS. It was "enervating and entirely unconvincing", and its author had become "a pathos addict".

Several reviewers, incidentally, were worried about a certain tweeness in the way Faulks dealt with sex in the book . A sentence from one scene — "She let him take his private pleasures of her" — was said to be symptomatic of the general coyness. But Faulks was not the only author with private pleasures on his mind. An early review of John Cole's thriller A Clouded Piece, noted the sentence, "Her white blouse was stretched tight across her breasts. Her opinions were pronounced ones too." Tits as metaphor: no wonder Cole has moved into fiction.

Pseuds Corner

It is disconcerting, when talking of Russian literature, to generate an original idea or spout an apposite quotation, only to find a week later that you have subconsciously purloined it from a long-forgotten reading of Prince Dimitri Svyatopolk-Mirsky's *History of Russian Literature* (1927).

DONALD RAYFIELD
Times Literary Supplement

Swale Borough Council has a new Assistant Tourism Development Officer. 24 year old Emma Gibbons joined the council at the beginning of January and will be responsible for developing its tourism web site and tourism marketing partnership work. She will also be supporting the implementation of the tourism element of the Economic Development Strategy with a lead in developing the new Destination Management System.

Swale News

My plan for the 12th annual conference in 2002 is to invite an after dinner speaker who can, with a light, lively touch make a significant contribution to debate. Whilst I would leave the final choice of topic to yourself, I would suggest something along the lines of "Balancing Functionalist and Interpretative Paradigms in Understanding Entrepreneurship".

Letter sent by Peter L. Jennings, editor of the *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, to a possible conference speaker

Brief Encounter

The simple authentic flavour in this sausage clearly reflects the charming naivety of the relationship shared between Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson in "Brief Encounter", filmed almost entirely at Carnforth Railway Station.

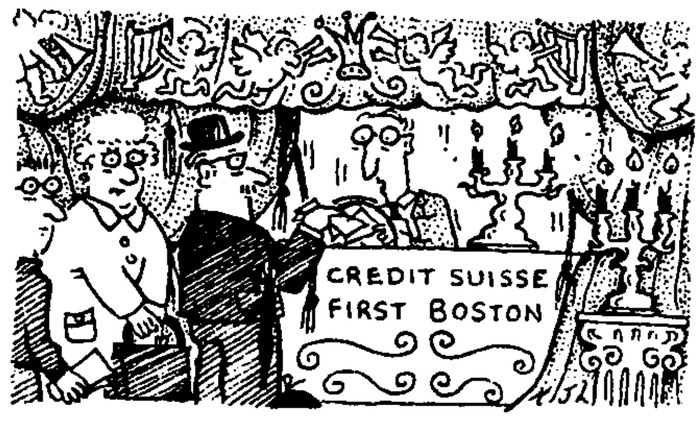
Notice in the window of Carnforth butcher

The Catalans appeared as likely to find a finishing touch as Gaudi might on his Sagrada Familia [Barcelona 0 Liverpool 0].

Guardian

We now have the ability to fulfill our clients' needs with any financial transaction, anytime, anywhere in the world. One plus one will significantly exceed two in the equation.

William B. Harrison Jr, President and Chief Executive, JPMorganChase, letter to shareholders following the recent merger



With its candid 'naturalism', dramatic lighting and bold use of colour, the Baroque movement of 17th century Rome is critically acclaimed as an important turning point in the history of art. So who better to sponsor 'The Genius of Rome' at the Royal Academy that Credit Suisse First Boston? We are at the forefront of change and offer our clients a unique combination of experience and insight to help them capitalise on future opportunities. So they can make their own fortune.

Advertisement (featuring Carvaggio's 'The Fortune Teller')

CONTRIBUTORS: David Stoddart, Anon, Brendan Barns, G. Halliday, Andrew Viner, James Jones, Alasdair Maclean.

£10 paid for entries

IN THE BACK

VIRDI'S REQUIEM

WHAT has happened to former police sergeant Gurpal Virdi? As *Eye* readers will recall, he was falsely accused of sending race hate mail to himself and colleagues at Ealing police station, convicted "beyond all doubt" by three commanders of the Metropolitan police, and then cleared beyond all doubt by an industrial tribunal which found the police guilty of race discrimination and awarded Sgt Virdi the highest ever damages for such behaviour.

After several meetings with Met commissioner Sir John Stevens, Sgt Virdi has been reinstated in the police service and is waiting on full pay while the Met finds a suitable job for him. So far no one else has even been accused, let alone charged with sending out the race hate mail for which Sgt Virdi was so falsely accused.

The matter was raised obliquely in disciplinary hearings against Sgt Virdi. Sgt Robert Hunter, a senior officer at Ealing, was questioned as follows

Q: Let me ask you about a gentleman called Jason Wallace, a police constable I think in your team about the time these events took place. Do you remember him?

A: Indeed I do, sir.

Q: Now, Jason Wallace was an individual very interested in computers, was he not?

A: Yes. He was, sir.

Q: Did you discuss computers with Jason Wallace?

A: No. He tried to discuss them with me, but Wallace was given to me as a bit of a problem to solve and I had to be very, very careful not to get close to him. He had many interests: golf, electric guitar, computers. I played the electric guitar and, you know, as soon as he found that that was my interest he started bringing his guitar into work and showing me music, anything to curry favour, so I kept him at a distance that way — the same with computers. He'd bring in a CD-rom for me or something, and you know no way was I taking anything off Wallace.

Q: I see. Did you have cause to reprimand him for making a racist comment about PC Sandhu?

A (*after a pause*): I've got half an idea that there was something there, but I can't remember what it was about. I keep fairly extensive records on Jason Wallace because he was a problem. I couldn't tell you off the top of my head what it was about, but I am sure I spoke to him about being rude once.

Q: Did you known that Jason Wallace had gained access to Sergeant Virdi's home directory?

A: No, I didn't, sir.

Q. In about the autumn of 1997?

A. No, definitely not, no.

Another sergeant who gave evidence at the hearing was Kenneth Mackenzie. He had conducted the inquiries into the race hate mail from Ealing, and he was asked:

Q: Did you make inquiries about PC Wallace?

A: Yes, we did. To my recollection he was on a period of annual leave just before Christmas that took him to about new year time, as best I remember.

Sgt Virdi of course also gave evidence at the hearing. He was asked about Jason Wallace, and he replied: "Jason Wallace was Sergeant Hunter's team member. He, as I said, was a bit of a computer freak. I believe in the summer of 1997 as a result of Inspector Bahra's formation of a Sikh or Asian society, I contacted or wrote e-mails to all ethnic officers. Within a few, or a couple of hours Jason Wallace was aware of my e-mail. I suspected that he gained access to my machine... and I immediately changed the password. There was another incident with PC Sandhu, where again I was covering for that team; and he refused to work with him.

Q: Did Wallace refuse to work with Sandhu?

A: Yes, sir. I confronted him with it, and he responded by: `You're not our team sergeant'. So I did a report and copied it to Sergeant Hunter. And he dealt with him.

On all this evidence it was clear that Jason Wallace was a computer freak who was known to access his colleagues' e-mails. He was also not very happy about cooperating with Asian colleagues. Yet he was never even interviewed by the investigators into the race hate mail for which Gurpal Virdi was wrongly convicted.

At any rate, PC Wallace's career in the Metropolitan police is now over. Soon after Sgt Virdi's arrest, Wallace was himself arrested for shoplifting, an offence for which he was acquitted after claiming that he was under great stress.

Now, from the *Ealing Gazette* of 16 March, comes more news of Jason Wallace. Another police disciplinary hearing, held under the auspices of the police complaints authority (PCA), heard that on 10 December 1997, Wallace was sent to Elthorne Avenue, Hanwell, to investigate the alleged theft of a bicycle. He stopped Winston Allen, a black former champion boxer, who was riding his own bicycle to his home further down the street.

When Mr Allen asked politely why he had been stopped and if he could proceed on his way home, PC Wallace sprayed him in the face with CS gas and arrested him for assaulting a police officer and causing criminal damage. In April 1998, a neighbour told Ealing magistrates she had witnessed the entire incident and did not see any blows exchanged. Mr Allen was acquitted on both charges.

At a disciplinary hearing — which for some reason was not heard until the beginning of March this year, more than three years after the incident — Caroline Mitchell, of the PCA, said: "Our investigation showed that the complainant (Mr Allen) was unlawfully arrested — there was no evidence to suggest that he had committed any assault. The CS spray should never have been used and certainly not at close quarters — just three feet away."

The hearing found against PC Wallace and he was "ordered to resign". The difference between being ordered to resign and sacked is that in the former the guilty copper keeps his pension rights.

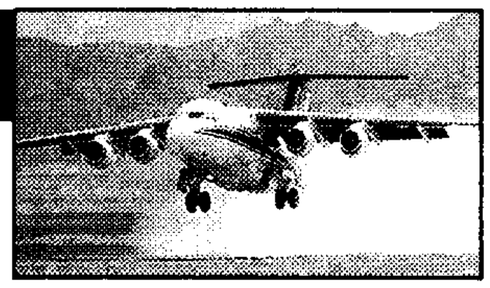
Flight decked

AFTER reading in the last *Eye* how toxic fumes have been seeping into the cabins of BAe 146 jets, an aviation enthusiast and radio ham contacted us about a radio message he had intercepted from the pilot of a BAe 146.

The plane was flying from Jersey to Stansted on 18 April, and the pilot was heard to ask air traffic control for permission to make an emergency landing at Gatwick because of a problem with one of the engines. The pilot reported "fumes in the cabin" and indicated that he had shut the offending engine down.

Asked if any of this could possibly be true, a spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority sent the following terse formal report.

"At approximately top of climb, master warning system (MWS) was triggered by engine vibration indication. Thick smoke then reported in the passenger cabin and also became evident on the flight deck. Immediate diversion to Gatwick requested,



'pan' declared and nr3 engine shut down. Emergency checklist actioned and smoke gradually dissipated. As flight deck communication was impossible using masks, they were removed and normal checklists then completed. Uneventful landing carried out with fire services in attendance."

Reassuring, no?

Number crunching

£2,000,000

each in pay-offs for outgoing BT chairman, Sir Iain Vallance, outgoing Shell chairman, Sir Mark Moody-Stuart and outgoing Royal Bank of Scotland chief executive, Sir George Mathewson

£20,000

average national annual wage

SHOPPED AT THE CO-OP

UNITED Co-ops, formerly United Norwest Cooperatives, is one of the biggest retailers in Britain with an annual turnover of more than £800m. The firm's approach to sexual harassment by its senior staff is not, however, exemplary.

Not long ago a manager of one of the firm's high street funeral services was approached by a female colleague who said she was being constantly and physically harassed by a senior executive of the parent company. Recently, she said, he had put his hand up her skirt, grabbed her breasts, dropped his trousers and even masturbated in front of her in a chapel of rest.

She begged the manager not to take the matter further since she valued her job, but a fortnight later she was back again with yet another story of the executive's bizarre behaviour. When another woman came to the manager with a similar complaint, he decided enough was enough and reported both cases to the chief executive, Martin Beaumont.

Mr Beaumont passed the report to other managers who immediately started to threaten the whistleblower. If he said anything about this case, he was told, he would be dismissed for gross misconduct. One personnel officer told him not to stir things up. The women alleging harassment were told that if they continued with their allegations they would be dismissed and sued for slander.

Then the whistleblower and the two women were told they would have to face disciplinary charges. The manager reckoned enough was enough. He left his job and issued a writ against the company. He took his case in person to an employment tribunal that sat for three days. In a strong judgment, the tribunal savaged United Co-ops for setting out to mislead and for being "at pains to restrict any information which might be relevant coming to the attention of the tribunal".

It described the personnel officer as "completely lacking in credibility" and "mendacious". To establish a suitable remedy, the organisation Public Concern at Work then recommended a London barrister, Christopher Camp. The outcome was an award of damages against the company of £140,000.

In most such circumstances the company responsible could expect some rather unfavourable publicity. Thanks to the pusillanimity of the tribunal and the British press, however, the firm and its top executives have not even been named. The tribunal listed the case as Mr A v X Ltd. The entire press has responded by not naming the company, Mr Beaumont or any of its directors. Indeed most of the press has been so intimidated by the anonymity afforded to the firm that it has not reported the case at all.

The only conceivable reason for this silence appears to be the law that makes it a crime to name the victims of sexual offences. For such a large firm as United Coops, however, the identity of the firm and the chief executive does not reveal the identities of the complainants. Public Concern at Work director Guy Dehn says: "There is no legal reason why this firm should not be named."

What happened to the harasser in the case? He took sick leave and was then allowed to resign on three months' notice. He is wanted for questioning by police and has finally been tracked down to his *new job*: in the police force.

NEW LABOUR, NEW PRIVATISATIONS

Oh DERA, Oh DERA

'NEW' Labour is running an historical reenactment of the Tory privatisations as it sells off the defence evaluation research agency (DERA).

DERA is Britain's top military research agency and includes the germ warfare labs at Porton Down. Accurate period details from the worst Tory sales – the revolving door recruitment policy, silly share options and fat cat salaries — are all being revived; and the government is even bringing in one of the Tory's favourite privatisers, Graham Love.

DERA is to be split in two. One half will remain in government hands, and the other will become a plc called "QinetiQ", in which the government will sell a 49 percent stake.

To help the sale Labour has brought in Sir John Egan, a veteran of the Jaguar Cars and British Airports Authority sell-offs. Incredibly, Egan is to be joined by Graham Love as QinetiQ's chief finance officer, just four years after Love was involved in a previous DERA sell-off.

Love was formerly a DERA finance director; but in 1997 the Conservatives decided to sell all DERA's "support services". Love arranged the sale and then became the well-paid managing director of the privatised firm, COMAX. COMAX continued to sell its services back to the government while paying Love a handsome executive salary.

Then things got even better for Love: Amey, the construction and "facilities management" giant, bought COMAX in July 1999 for £145m in a handy windfall for Comax shareholders. Love got a whole bunch of Amey shares and a new job as Amey's "deputy managing director of the expanded business process outsourcing division". Love resigned from Amey-Comax last July only to reappear on the board of the soon-to-be-privatised QinetiQ.

In February this year Baroness Symons, defence procurement minister, appeared before the defence select committee to defend the DERA sale from angry MPs, including Labour's Bruce George and Laura Moffat. George wanted to be sure Labour would avoid the excesses of Tory privatisations — the share options and tripled salaries for former public servants. He also hoped "we will have no revolving door" in the sell-off.

Given the way Graham Love has gone through the revolving door and back again, Symons was unable to reassure the MPs. She did try to impress upon the committee the strict employment regulations covering former civil servants, but she had trouble remembering what the rules actually were. "There is a committee to which these cases go outside the department," she told the MPs. But she had to add: "I have momentarily forgotten who chairs the committee but I am sure we can get the name to you..."

The committee in question is the advisory committee on business appointments, chaired by Lord Mayhew. However, the committee is a soft touch when it comes to Amey-Comax. It gave "unconditional approval" for former deputy chief of defence procurement Lt General Sir Robert Hayman-Joyce to become a non-executive director of Comax in 1999. Nor was there a barrier to Major General John Stokoe joining Love as a senior adviser to the Comax "strategic sales team" in the same year.

Stokoe, formerly deputy commander-in-chief of the army, had "board level accountability" for the military's estate management, private finance initiatives and public-private partnerships. With Love's return to DERA, it is now no longer easy to see where the army ends and Amey begins.

PS: The ministry of defence spent £400,000 over six months to come up with the name "QinetiQ". But it failed to notice that someone else had got there first: www.qinetiq.net is "the the first website of the digital artist Cici d'Amour".

JOBS FOR THE NOBS

NEWS that defence secretary Geoff Hoon is trying to privatise fire services at military airfields — and that Serco is a leading bidder for the £4bn contract, and that 2,100 staff face job cuts when the new firm takes over — has angered many MPs.

Intense backstage lobbying ensured that Serco did not take over air traffic control because of fears about job cuts and safety. Yet here it is again bidding for another safety critical job.

It is not entirely fair to call Serco a job-slashing outfit: it has certainly found jobs for some people. While airfield fire-fighting staff might well be sacked, former deputy chief of defence procurement Air Marshall Sir Roger Austin was given a job as a "fellow" of Serco's "strategic forum".

This pattern of jobs for the nobs, sackings and pay cuts for the poor bloody infantry is classic Serco, which recently proved again that there is money in misery. In Britain the firm runs prisons and detention centres for children and immigrants so successfully that two top executives were able to cash in £5m worth of Serco shares and options.

Chairman Richard White made more than £3m, the balance going to executive director Iestyn Williams.

HULL OF A WAY TO DIE

LAST week's decision not to charge police officers in Hull with the manslaughter of former paratrooper Christopher Alder, despite an inquest jury's verdict of unlawful killing, is likely to be challenged in the high court.

The family of Christopher Alder, whose last breathes were recorded on CCTV as he lay face down on the floor in the custody suite at Hull police station, believe the crown prosecution service (CPS) applied the wrong legal test when it decided to reject charges of gross negligence manslaughter against the officers.

The family's lawyers have expressed their concern to the CPS and if they are not satisfied with the response will seek a judicial review.

Last year an inquest jury in East Yorkshire returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" after watching the 11-minute video of the 37-year-old paratrooper's death and hearing weeks of expert medical evidence.

Following the verdict the CPS said it would reconsider its earlier decision to charge officers with a little used common law offence of "misconduct in public office". But last week, after the five officers themselves failed in the high court to have the "unlawful killing" inquest verdict overturned, the CPS decided it would be taking no further action and would proceed only on the misconduct charges.

It seems the decision was at least partly based on new medical evidence obtained by the CPS about whether Mr Alder could have suffered a heart disturbance. There was a subsequent change of opinion by one expert, who said he could no longer be sure of a causal connection between Christopher's prone position on the police station floor and his subsequent death. There has been no change of mind by other experts.

Christopher's sister Janet said she believed the CPS was putting itself in the place of a judge and jury by not allowing conflicting medical evidence to go before a criminal court. "The inquest jury was allowed to hear all the evidence and make up its own mind — I cannot see why a criminal court jury cannot be allowed to do the same thing," she told the *Eye*.

Lawyers for the family maintain the CPS applied too high a legal test when deciding whether to bring manslaughter charges — that was whether any alleged negligence on the part of an officer actually caused the death, when the proper tests should be whether it "more than minimally, negligibly or trivially contributed" to the death.

Now in bizarre twist to the story, Janet learned last week that Christopher's heart was not buried with his body after the inquest. While the news has distressed her, it has also given her new hope because the family can get its own experts to examine the organ to see if any further medical light can be shed on Christopher's death.

MISHCON IMPOSSIBLE

SELF-IMPORTANT people who, in response to criticism, take flight to the libel courts got a much-deserved kick in the nether regions from the case of Unsdorfer and Parkgate Aspen v Gardener.

A year ago, in issue 1000, the *Eye* disclosed that a leaseholders' newsletter criticising managing agents of a block of flats in north London had so infuriated the agents that they sued Mrs Barbara Gardener, the leaseholder responsible, for libel.

For this purpose the agents secured the prestigious, if expensive, services of the well-known London solicitors Mishcon de Reya.

Mrs Gardener argued that the allegations in her newsletter were true. Before this could be tested, however, she asked the court to strike out the action on the ground that what she had written was covered by qualified privilege and was not motivated by malice. This application was heard in the high court in December last year by Mr Justice Gray, whose judgment has only just been made available.

The judge swiftly rejected the allegations of malice and accepted Mrs Gardener's plea of qualified privilege. "It is plain to me," he said, "that where one resident of a housing estate has a perceived grievance about the manner in which a managing agent of the estate [is] carrying out its duties, that resident has a sufficient legitimate interest to communicate the grievance to other residents of the same estate who have a common and corresponding interest in the subject matter of the communication. Accordingly I am satisfied that the occasion was one of qualified privilege."

Parkgate Aspen and Mr Unsdorfer, who did not attend the hearing, were ordered to pay the entire costs of the case.

The judgment will come as some relief to tenants in large blocks of flats who have noticed their managing agents' sensitivity to criticism. In 1992 a tenant of Petersham House, Kensington, circulated a strongly-worded letter criticising the managing agents of the block. He was surprised to get in return a letter from a firm of London lawyers denouncing his allegations as "extremely libellous" and threatening legal action. The threat was firmly criticised by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and did not develop into a legal action.

Mr Christopher Kane, the Fellow of the Royal Institution responsible for the management of Petersham House, later left his job when his firm went into receivership and is now a member of the London leasehold valuation tribunal.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

FORGETFUL Tory MP and former minister Tony Baldry has seemingly had second thoughts about lending his name to the latest efforts of ex-bankrupt and failed company veteran Graham Avery to return Scotland's oldest public company to the stock market.

Baldry has resigned as a director of Azmara, formerly jute company Titaghur, which has been struggling to obtain an AIM listing with the help of Oriental & African Strategic Investment Services and brokers Seymour Pierce. Baldry is a director of OASIS. Seymour Pierce is a firm with a reputation for less than blue blooded clients.

Baldry resigned in February after only six months as an Azmara director. But it is surprising he ever considered sharing a boardroom with Avery who has an arrest record in Britain and India as well as a business history which would make the Stock Exchange think more than twice about allowing any company with which he is connected to be listed even on the lightly regulated AIM.

As *Eye* readers will know, however, Tony Baldry has been very busy accumulating directorships since the Tories were banished into the wilderness and he was so hard up that he had to borrow £5,000 from Asian solicitor Sarosh Zaiwalla. Baldry subsequently recommended the helpful Zaiwalla for an honour without declaring the loan.

Eye readers if not Baldry will also know of Avery's chequered business history and his activities at Azmara/Titaghur, whose roots lie in India's jute business with mills in West Bengal, since his arrival in 1997.

When chairman of WB Industries in 1989 Avery entered into an overvalued property deal with Stephen Hinchliffe, jailed earlier this year on unrelated corruption charges concerning his bribing of United Mizrahi Bank officials to obtain loans for his collapsed Facia shop chain. WB was unable to complete the £1.7m deal and the gross over-valuation of the property emerged. Avery was sacked and the police called in. Avery was arrested but never charged.

In 1991 Avery was made bankrupt. After his discharge from bankruptcy he returned as a director of International Telecom Industries, wound up by the Customs & Excise in 1996, and Greenwich Metal, wound up by a trade creditor in 1998.

By then he had discovered Titaghur and began promising to revive the company which had all but sunk under its financial problems in West Bengal. Since 1999 Avery has been promising locked in shareholders that he would obtain a new listing, first on OFEX and now on AIM. The story is that the company is rich in Indian assets which can be utilised to relaunch Azmara into the booming Indian IT industry. To this end OASIS and Seymour Pierce have been seeking to raise almost £5m by way of a private placing of 45m new Azmara shares.

But there is only one problem, as repeatedly stressed by sources in Calcutta with knowledge of the jute operations. The Azmara jute mills and surrounding property are in hock to the local Indian authorities because of more than £50m owed in taxes and debts to the state provident fund and to workers. The mills are effectively under state control and cannot be sold without the government's approval.

Indeed Avery was arrested by the Indian authorities over the failure to make the provident fund payments on a visit to the company in May 1999. He was released after three days on the promise of payment. No payment being made the state authorities have now lodged a claim against all Avery's shares in Azmara.

Details of these events have been supplied to the Department of Timidity & Inaction as well as OASIS and Seymour Pierce. Not long after OASIS was contacted Baldry resigned as an Azmara director. But the question is why did he ever accept Avery's invitation other than for the money?

GEOFFREY Robinson, Labour's former minister for tax havens, seems to be digging himself into an ever deeper hole over the issue of the £200,000 payment solicited from and paid by his benefactor Robert Maxwell.

Robinson faces a new hearing before the Commons standards and privileges committee after a further investigation into the payment, which he denies receiving, by the parliamentary watchdog Elizabeth Filkin.

After a series of half-truths, distortions and what appear to some as not so much amnesia as lies, Robinson may now have to explain why he asked for the £200,000, why he said he did not receive it and who did. The Filkin answer seems to be that the payment was directed by Robinson to a third party.

But more significant than the grilling by the committee could be the view taken of the former treasury minister's answers by the Inland Revenue. Robinson has already done a private settlement with the Revenue over his inheritance via the offshore Orion Trust from his Belgian benefactrix, Joska Bourgeois. This followed the revelation that part of Robinson's inheritance had been directed into the family trust after Bourgeois's death.

Robinson had been both an executor and the main beneficiary. The trust subsequently made tax free payments to Robinson and his family as well as investing at Robinson's suggestion in his since crashed company TransTec and his beloved Coventry City soccer club.

The taxman clearly decided that Robinson was liable for tax on some elements of the Bourgeois inheritance and the Orion arrangements. UK resident taxpayers like Robinson cannot simply direct assets or income into tax free offshore havens to avoid UK tax if they are the supposed beneficiaries.

Similarly payments requested for services cannot then be easily diverted to third parties in order to avoid tax. The Revenue may wish to know who paid any tax on the £200,000 and why if the money was due to Robinson. The payment would have generated a tax bill of up to £80,000. The Orion Trust did not exist in 1990-91 when the payment was requested and made. But it could be very difficult for Robinson to explain to the taxman why – if he personally asked for the payment – it was made to a third party such as a company or another family trust.

When the Revenue makes a settlement it usually insists that the taxpayer confirms that he has made a full disclosure of all relevant information. If Robinson now admits that he did indirectly receive the £200,000 from Maxwell or diverted it to a third party for his own subsequent benefit and did not declare that substantial income at the time or as part of the Orion settlement, then he could be in far more serious trouble than parliamentary censure.

SHAREHOLDERS in troubled conglomerate Tomkins may have been puzzled as to why, after belatedly deciding to remove Arthur Andersen as auditors, new chairman David Newlands did not decide to replace them with Ernst & Young which had carried out the internal investigation into the corporate excesses of deposed dictator Greg Hutchings.

Instead the board had a beauty contest and chose Deloitte & Touche, by coincidence a firm not unknown to the Tomkins chairman. Newlands called them in last year to report on problems inside Britax International where he is also chairman. The result – a £25m write-off by the components group due to "poor management". And a long time ago David Newlands himself worked for… Touche Ross.

INVESTIGATIONS into the £100m collapse last year of trade finance group Versailles have already thrown up some highly unusual auditing techniques which may require pretty good answers from accountants Nunn Hayward.

The small Gerrards Cross firm would appear to be already preparing its alibis if speculation that the partner responsible for the Versailles audit has departed turn out to be correct.

The Versailles accounts were prepared with the assistance of an unqualified north London accountant/bookkeeper called Gilani who was well known to finance director Frederick Clough and chief executive Carl Cushnie. The bookkeeper is said to have been the link between Clough and Nunn Hayward. Clough had been expelled from the Institute of Chartered Accountants over an offshore bank collapse.

What checks Nunn Hayward made with the counter-parties with whom Versailles was doing such profitable business were often by letter rather than personal contact. This left plenty of opportunity for those behind the undoubted fraud which involved some £50m of phoney business.

With Clough in hiding there is little doubt who is the main target of the Serious Farce Office investigation. But the extent of Cushnie's knowledge of the Gilani arrangement and Clough's activities is still less than clear. The Versailles founder (who denies any knowledge of the fraud) is helping the SFO with its inquiries as part of his efforts to cling on to the near £30m he pocketed from selling Versailles shares weeks before the collapse and after the DTI had begun asking questions.

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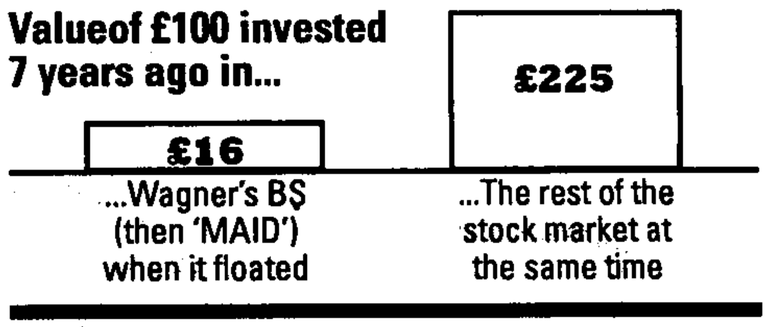
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MAD OLD BIRD required by Wealthy Mad Old Bastard. The standard of insanity needed, to enjoy clinging to the back of the fastest production bike ever made whilst touring Europe, maybe the world and enjoy regular serious booze-ups. To enjoy jogging and climbing mountains – last year did the three peaks in under 24 hours. Anything else that takes your fancy. Me: six foot three, slim, not much hair, number two all over the head and face. West Midlands. Box 0727.

OWL SEEKS MOUSE.
Notting Hill planner/architect,
(single, unencumbered guy, 50, 180cm, 70kg, non-smoking)
very intelligent, bookish, supportive, kind, loving, faithful but shy
seeks lady soulmate ditto for happiness ever after or nearest offer.
Box 0427.

WARM, LITERATE doctor, 39, WLTM slim sporty bosomy woman, 25-35, into theatre. Email: agst18@yahoo.co.uk

WARM-HEARTED, warm-blooded, life loving London widow seeks genuine unattached man, 55 to 67 – mirth-making, tall, solvent – to put the sparkle back in life. Box 0327.

HIV+ MALE, 46, seeks female for platonic friendship, days out etc. All E-mails answered. itsspringtime@lycos.com

SEMI-RETIRED CO. DIRECTOR, continental, seeks intelligent lady any age, colour, nationality to pass lonely hours when in London. Box 2027.

BLUE-EYED HANDSOME attached six foot 40 yr old wltm funny needy lady for afternoon delight and laughs – cheeky_ize@hotmail.com

AMIABLE MALE, young looking 60, occasionally assertive, capable of wit and intellect, interests include music and countryside, WLTM a pleasant, intelligent, erotically unassertive younger female. London/Essex. Photo and phone appreciated. Box 0827.

HONEST MAN NEEDS WORK. I'm very attractive, too clever, fit, 43, solvent and resting between careers – now what I need is a generous insightful woman (amateur or professional...) to help me over my persistent performance anxiety. There, I've said it.. thereivesaidit@yahoo.com

PERVY POWER PLAY? Chains of love? Do you like switches and switching, serving and being served? Man, usual fetishes, unusual mind, seeks woman ditto to make laugh and do other things with. Deeply intelligent and wonderful if only people realised – that is both of us. reage101@hotmail.com or Box 1827.

NORTHERN BUSINESSMAN, 54, kind and generous, wishes to meet adventurous, uninhibited lady for regular occasional meetings/liaisons and mutually rewarding friendship/relationship. Genuineness and discretion assured and hoped for. Either Northwest, or London locations. Box 1727.

METROPOLITAN MAN, 45, tall, assertive with aspirations of wit and sophistication, seeks petite, rather buxom companion. London. Box 0127.

OXBRIDGE GENTLEMAN, 40, slim, cultured, humorous, suffers from rheumatoid arthritis – seeks elegent, sensitive masseuse. London Box 2127.

MALE, LATE 20's, blond, average build and height seeks attractive female, London – pdnewberry@hotmail.com or Box 1627.

SEVERIN, 42, INTELLIGENT, attractive, professional, London, seeks, compatible Wanda – Severin26@Hotmail.com

PROFESSIONAL MAN,
late 40's, WLTM woman with GSOH,
in need of cuddles, caring, more cuddles
and how and then
firm discipline and training.
Any age, anywhere. Box 0627.

2 SWF, 21, WLTM 2 SM (GSOH) 4 GT&L. ASAP drunken-urban-chicks@bigfoot.com

SENSUAL WOMAN SOUGHT for friend/lover, by warm, sensitive, articulate male, young sixties, open marriage Enjoys arts, conversation, good food/wine. Looking for worthwhile relationship South London. Box 0927.

SHORT, FAT, IGNORANT LIAR
(M 44)
seeks similarly attached, educated lady
for discreet enjoyment
of art, wine, food, gardens
and each other.
Midlands/Lincs. Box 1527
stargazer365excite.co.uk

BEAUTIFUL BUT BEREFT? Considerate English businessman – fit, forties – seeks genuinely beautiful, slim sexy woman for passionate times and support, if needed. Ideally aged 35-45. Photo appreciated. Discretion assured. Box 1427.

LADY (30 – 50) seeking sensual fulfilment and romance required by professional man. Discretion and confidentiality assured. I am mid-40s, slim, 6' and fit. You know this is what you're looking for... Bath/Bristol, Somerset. Box 2227.

BLUE EYED BOY, (31) seeks authoritative lady (any age) London/South East. Box 1227.

TRUCK OWNER, dreadlocked, light-skinned – seeks female (18-30) companion on my regular trips to Southern Spain. Lively, intelligent with sense of adventure. See the real Spain from the luxury of my Topline 580 Scania. Tel HOWARD 07802 800186 or 0034 639 584473.

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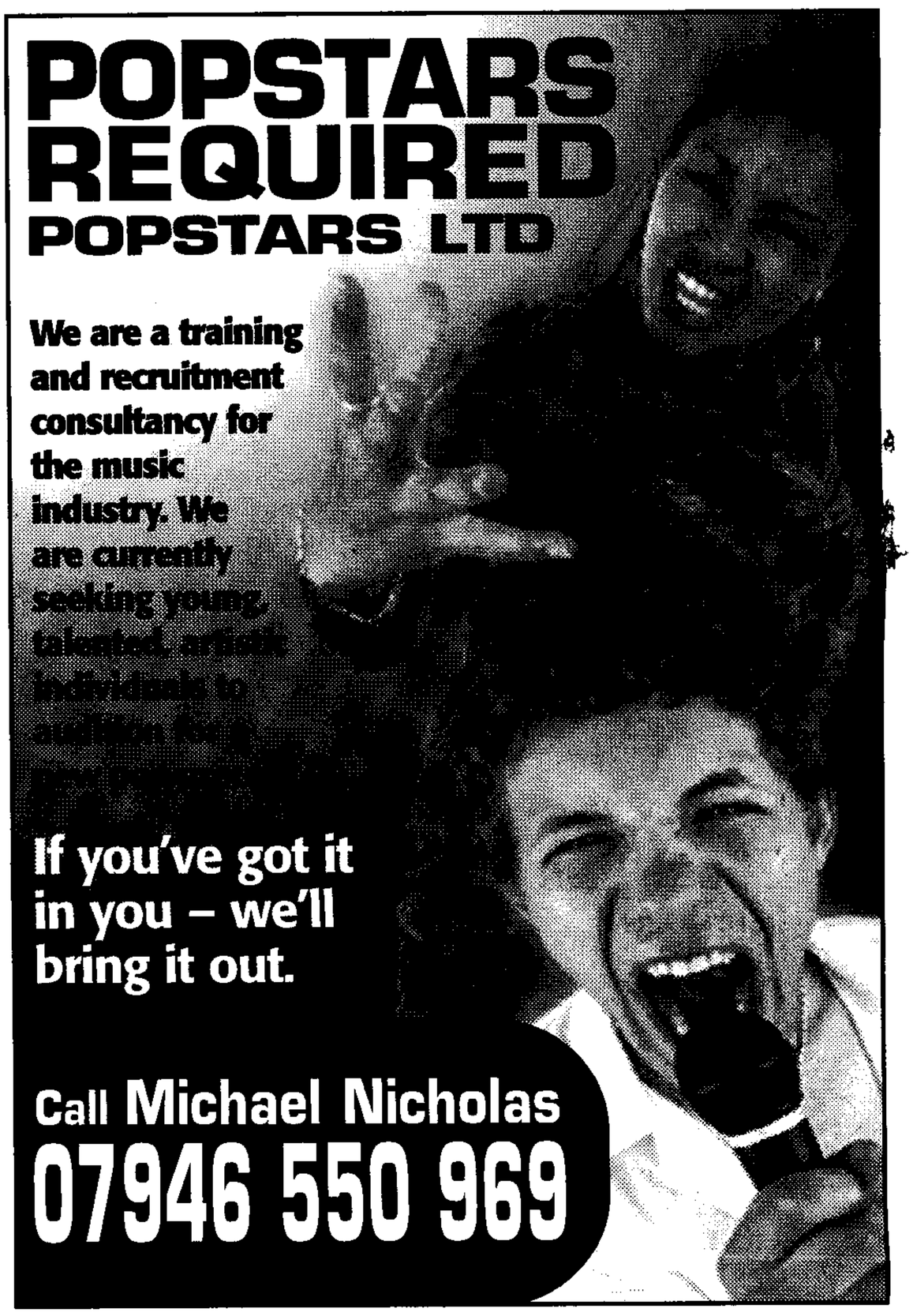
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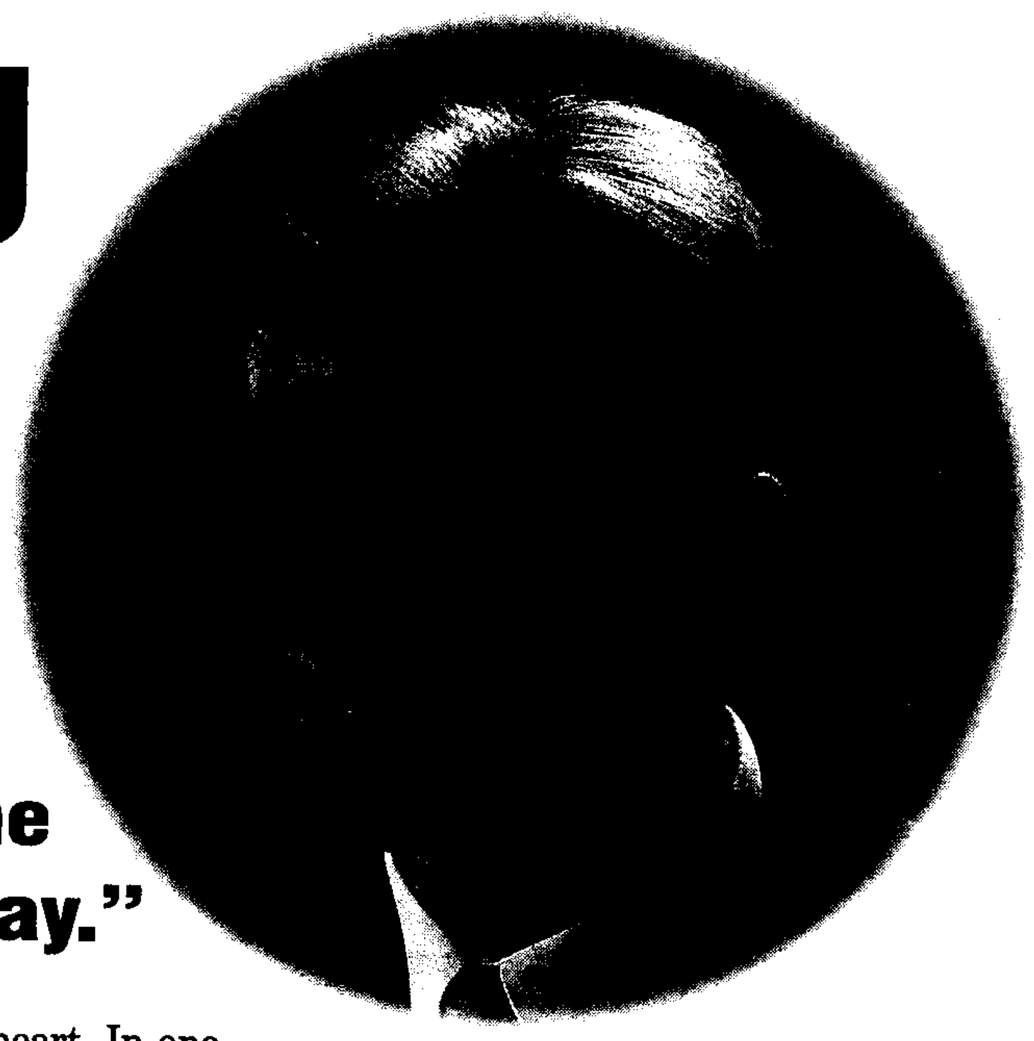

"How I learned the secret in one evening. It has helped me every day."

When my old friend Richard Faulkner invited me to a dinner party at his house, I little thought it would be the direct means of doubling my salary in less than two years. Yet it was, and here is the way it all came about.

Towards the end of the evening things began to drag a bit as they often do at parties. Finally someone suggested the old idea of having everyone do a 'party-piece'. Some sang, others forced weird sounds out of the piano, recited, told stories and so on.

Then it came to Peter Brown's turn. He said he had a simple 'trick' which he hoped we would like. First he asked to be blindfolded. Those present were to call out 25 random numbers of three figures each, such as 161,249, and so on. He asked me to list the numbers in order as they were called.

Peter then astounded everyone by repeating the entire list of 25 numbers backwards and forwards. Then he asked people to request numbers by their position in the list, such as the eighth number called, the fourth number and so on. Instantly he repeated back the correct number in the positions called. He did this with the entire list – over and over again without making a single mistake.

Then Peter asked someone to shuffle a deck of cards and call them out in order. Still blindfolded he instantly named the cards in their order backwards and forwards.

You may well imagine our amazement at Peter's remarkable memory feat.

"There was really nothing to it – simply a memory feat"

On the way home that evening I asked Peter Brown how it was done. He said there was really nothing to it — simply a memory feat. Anyone could develop a good memory, he said, by following a few simple rules. And then he told me exactly how to do it.

What Peter said I took to heart. In one evening I made remarkable strides towards improving my memory. In just a few days I learned to do exactly what he had done.

The most gratifying thing about the improvement of my memory was the remarkable way it helped me in business and in my social life. I discovered that my memory training had literally put a razor edge on my mind. My thinking had become clearer, quicker, keener. I was fast acquiring that mental grasp and alertness I had so often admired in men who were spoken of as "brilliant" and "geniuses".

Then I noticed a marked improvement in my writing and conversational powers. What's more my salary has increased dramatically.

"I can instantly recall anything I want to remember"

These are only a few of the hundreds of ways I have profited by my trained memory. No longer do I suffer the frustration of meeting people I know and not being able to recall their names. The moment I see someone I have met before a name leaps into my mind. Now I find it easy to recall everything I read. I can now master a subject in considerably less time than before. Price lists, reports, quotations, data of all kinds. I can recall in detail almost at will. I rarely make a mistake.

What Peter told me that eventful evening was this: "Send for details of Dr. Bruno Furst's Memory Course." I did. That was my first step in learning to do all the remarkable things I have told you about. In fact, I was so impressed that I got permission to publish Dr. Furst's Course myself.

My advice to you now is don't wait another minute. Full details of Dr. Furst's remarkable Course are available free on request. You will be amazed how a powerful memory can improve your opportunities at work and in your social life. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by posting the coupon today.

BOB HEAP

We, the publishers, have printed full details of Dr. Furst's unique memory training method in a free book entitled "Adventures in Memory". For your free copy, simply phone 0800 298 7070 today or post the coupon below (no stamp needed). Or send your name and address to: Memory and Concentration Studies, (Dept. PYM21T), FREEPOST, Bowden Hall, Marple, Stockport, SK6 6YA.

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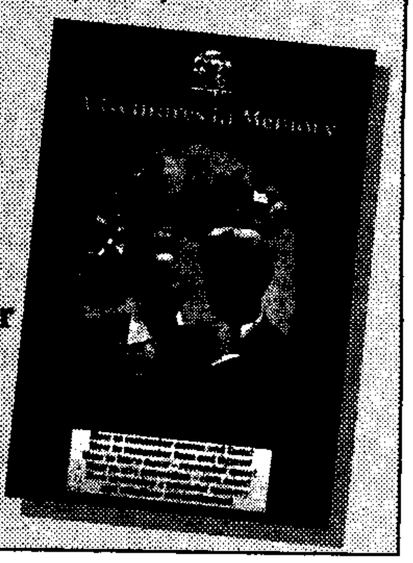

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